THE RATIONAL AND THE INTUITIVE: A THEMATIC JUXTAPOSITION IN THE FICTION OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

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by

Harriet Howell Custer

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Throughout the broad scope of William Faulkner's fiction a thematic pattern emerges which has hitherto been little dealt with by his critics. This pattern presents, initially, an exploration of the principles of rationality and intuition as opposing faculties of the human mind. For Faulkner, however, rationality and intuition could not be divorced from man's mental and sensual awareness. Through an examination of the manners in which various characters shape and react to experience, I hope to demonstrate the force and magnitude with which the rational/intuitive theme permeates Faulkner's fiction.

Faulkner's characters range from those who are almost purely intuitive to those who reject intuition and attempt to construct elaborate systems of thought without it. This is a metaphysical pattern which is evident throughout Faulkner's work; it becomes, however, far more prominent in his later novels. In the Snopes trilogy he sets up the rational/intuitive juxtaposition in terms of a conflict, between certain characters and within others, which must be resolved if modern man is to survive his propensity for self-destruction. It is with these three novels--The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion--that this study is primarily concerned.

In The Hamlet Faulkner sets up this conflict through two main characters: Flem Snopes is an incarnation of cold logic and acquisitiveness, whereas Eula Varner is an embodiment of hot subterranean urges. As Flem rapaciously takes over Frenchman's Bend,he is countered by V. K. Ratliff, who initiates and ultimately sustains the fight against Snopesism. Ratliff is the last and the most fully drawn of a small number of Faulkner characters who truly succeed as human beings. This results from their ability to employ both intuition and reason not only in their reactions to experience, but in their shaping of experience as well.

In The Town Faulkner introduces Gavin Stevens, who functions as the chief protagonist in the last two novels of the trilogy. Gavin is a romantic idealist who contains within himself the conflict represented externally by Flem and Eula Snopes. He is constantly juxtaposed to Ratliff, whose shrewd intelligence and realistic perceptions eventually help Gavin to resolve his internal conflict and become a man capable of coping with the modern world.

In The Mansion Gavin finally learns, through the activities of Mink and Linda Snopes, to approach experience realistically. Mink, the man of fierce faith in natural justice, joins with Linda, who ultimately combines Eula's intuitive nature with a strong dedication to a practical ideology. These two remaining Snopeses move together toward their mutual destruction of Flem, who represents the very antithesis of human obligation and natural responsibility. Through recognizing his own moral complicity in the murder of Flem, Gavin finally rejects his reliance upon illusion and acknowledges his membership in the ranks of humanity. At the conclusion of the trilogy he and Ratliff stand alone--two old men who, through their ability to reinforce reason with intuition, prevail in the face of modern man's spiritual dilemma.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

In order to eliminate repetitive footnotes, references to primary sources will be made contextually throughout this thesis. The following key will serve as a guide to editions of Faulkner's works which have been used.

(A) Absalom, Absalom! 1936; rpt. New York: Modern Library, 1964.

(D) As I Lay Dying. 1930; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1957.

(F) A Fable. 1954; rpt. New York: Signet, 1968.

(FN) Faulkner at Nagano, ed. Robert A. Jelliffe. 3rd ed. Tokyo: Kenkyusha Press, 1962.

(FU) Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia 1957-1958, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner. New York: Vintage, 1965.

(FW) Faulkner at West Point, ed. Joseph L. Fant and Robert Ashley. New York: Vintage, 1964.

(G) Go Down, Moses. New York: Modern Library, 1942.

(H) The Hamlet. 1940; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1964.

(I) Intruder in the Dust. New York: Modern Library, 1948.

(K) Knight's Gambit. New York: Random House, 1949.

(L) Light in August. 1932; rpt. New York: Modern Library, 1959.

(M) The Mansion. New York: Vintage, 1959.

(R) The Reivers. New York: Signet, 1962.

(RN) Requiem for a Nun. 1950; rpt. New York: Signet, 1961.

(SF) The Sound and the Fury. 1929; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1946.

(T) The Town. New York: Vintage, 1957.

CHAPTER I

"A MORE OR LESS ARTIFICIAL MAN" AND "A MAN WHO PRACTICED VIRTUE FROM SIMPLE INSTINCT"[1]

Throughout the broad scope of William Faulkner's fiction a thematic pattern emerges which has hitherto been little dealt with by his critics. This pattern presents, initially, what would appear to be an exploration of the principles of rationality and intuition as diametrically opposed faculties of the human mind. Such faculties, however, can be viewed as totally opposite only as philosophical abstractions; inasmuch as they are products of human cognition they are ultimately inseparable, and can be distinguished only by degree.

For Faulkner, rationality and intuition could not be divorced from man's mental and sensual awareness. The great power of his work lies in characterization, and it is through this vehicle that Faulkner expresses the theme with which this study is concerned. Through an examination of the manners in which various characters shape and react to experience, I hope to demonstrate the force and magnitude with which the rational/intuitive theme permeates Faulkner's fiction. The

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[1]FU, p. 140.

terms rational and intuitive, however, are so complex that they require rather extensive defining before one can proceed to an examination of their place in Faulkner's work.

The rational faculty is commonly associated with reason, logic, and mathematical calculation. The rational mind is primarily deductive; it deals with facts, and forms conclusions based on empirical evidence. The intuitive faculty, on the other hand, is associated with instinct; it is primarily inductive, and is ordinarily regarded as an immediate apprehension, cognition, or judgment arrived at directly, without reasoning or inference. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) was the first of the "modern" philosophers to draw a wide distinction between the two faculties. He opens his Pensées with a discussion of "the difference between the mathematical and the intuitive mind." He says, initially, that mathematical principles are "removed from ordinary use"; intuitive principles, on the other hand, are "found in common use, and are before the eyes of everybody."[1] Pascal tends to view the mathematical mind as so impractical that the concepts which result from such a mode of thought are rendered all but meaningless in relation to human activity, whereas the intuitive mind is a practical faculty very closely bound up in human behavior. He says that "Intuitive minds . . . , being thus accustomed to judge at a single glance, are so astonished when they are presented with

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[1] Pascal's Pensées, intro. T. S. Eliot, trans. W. F. Trotter (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), p. 1.

propositions of which they understand nothing, and the way to which is through definitions and axioms so sterile, and which they are not accustomed to see thus in detail, that they are repelled and disheartened."[1] Heavy philosophical systems, unless somehow made relevant, have no meaning for the masses of ordinary men. William Barrett, in his study of the modern temper, Irrational Man, correlates Pascal's statements regarding the opposing faculties with modern man's mania for scientific truth. Pascal, Barrett says, "clearly saw that the feebleness of our reason is part and parcel of the feebleness of our human condition generally."[2]

Pascal's discussion of the mathematical and the intuitive minds is very sketchy, however. Comprehensive analysis of these faculties was left to later philosophers, the first of whom was Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). In his Critique of Pure Reason, Kant examines the nature of intuitive thinking as the source from which the intellect springs. He says that "Whatever the process and the means may be by which knowledge reaches its objects, there is one that reaches them directly, and forms the ultimate material of all thought, viz. intuition."[3] Perhaps Kant's greatest contribution to modern

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[1] Ibid., p. 2.

[2] Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy (1958; rpt. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1962), p. 115.

[3] Critique of Pure Reason, trans. F. Max Müller (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books, 1966), p. 21.

philosophy is his delineation of the actual thought-process, the development of immediate response into the formulation of concept. For Kant, the key to human thought is what he terms "sensibility," or the

> faculty (receptivity) of receiving representations, according to the manner in which we are affected by objects. . . . Objects therefore are given to us through our sensibility. Sensibility alone supplies us with intuitions. These intuitions become thought through the understanding, and hence arise conceptions. All thought therefore, must, directly or indirectly, go back to intuition, i.e., to our sensibility. . . .[1]

Thus Kant saw intuition as the base of human thought, by which faculty reason arises through an understanding of the relations between the various observations which we derive from intuitive apprehensions.

Reason, however, is "impelled by a tendency of its nature to go beyond the field of experience"[2]--to the sensual world where intuition is an integral part of the thought process. It would appear that the adverse reaction of the Romantics to the Reason of the Eighteenth century is a result of this "tendency" of reason to "go beyond the field of experience." William Blake's proverb, "The Tygers of Wrath are wiser than the Horses of Instruction,"[3] and William Wordsworth's

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[1]Ibid., p. 21.

[2]Ibid., p. 511.

[3]"Proverbs of Hell," The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne and The Complete Poetry of William Blake, intro. Robert Silliman Hillyer (New York: Modern Library, 1941), p. 654. Nietzsche refers to the tiger as a symbol of emotional response, and to the horse as representative of sterile intellect in The Birth of Tragedy, trans., Clifton Fadiman (New York: Modern Library, 1927), p. 955.

assertion that

> Our meddling intellect
> Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:--
> We murder to dissect,[1]

attest to a new reverence for nature and for natural response, which is closely related to the faculty of intuition. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), whose influence on twentieth century thought is perhaps unparalleled, discusses the rational and the intuitive minds in the form of a dialectic. In The Birth of Tragedy Nietzsche suggests that intuition and reason must be equally balanced; they represent thesis and antithesis, and only the man who has the ability to synthesize them is truly creative. He refers in this context to the creation of art, but his concept is equally relevant for ordinary man. We must perceive, he says, "not merely by logical inference, but with the immediate certainty of intuition," for "the continuous development of art is bound up with the Apollonian and Dionysian duality. . . ."[2] In Greece this opposition became synthesized, "by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic will," in the creation of Attic tragedy.[3] This synthesis, of course, extends far beyond the temporal boundaries of ancient Greece.

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[1]"The Tables Turned," The Poems of William Wordsworth, intro. Viscount Grey of Fallodon (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, n.d.), 11, 26-28.

[2]The Birth of Tragedy, p. 957.

[3]Ibid., p. 951.

Nietzsche's concept reflects a coupling of the eighteenth century conception of rational man with the Romantic emphasis upon intuitive response to nature. This latter movement was seized upon by the members of a new philosophical movement who were intent upon considering the anthropological and psychological aspects of the human mind.[1]

The heavy stress which Siegmund Freud and Carl Jung lay upon the unconscious and conscious realms of the human mind serves as a point of departure in any attempt to explain the nature of the rational and the intuitive faculties. Jung says that intuition is "chiefly dependent on unconscious processes of a very complex nature." He defines intuition as "perception via the unconscious,"[2] whereas rationality is a faculty which belongs primarily to the conscious mind. Once it is associated with the unconscious mind, intuition becomes as complex a process as that of rationality, or analytical reason. If intuition refers to an "immediate" response or apprehension of an object or experience, then it must be determined just what is meant by "immediate." Ernst Cassirer, in An Essay on Man, draws a distinction between animal and

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[1]Among these figures are Henri Bergson, Siegmund Freud, Carl Jung, Ernst Cassirer, Susanne Langer, and others. Cassirer uses the term "anthropological philosopher" to designate his position in relation to what one might call the modern "metaphysicists" in An Essay on Man (1944; rpt. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), p. 4.

[2]Carl Gustav Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, trans. R. F. C. Hull, 2nd ed., Bollingen Series XX, The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 9, Part I (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 282.

human response which has a direct bearing on this problem. In the case of organic (or animal) responses, he says, "a direct and immediate answer is given to an outward stimulus"; in human response, on the other hand, "the answer is delayed."[1] If we attribute "instinct" to animals, and "intuition" to man, then the problem of the "immediacy" of the response becomes clearer. According to Cassirer, man "lives in a symbolic universe";[2] he makes a symbol of everything he perceives or apprehends. "No longer can man confront reality immediately. . . . Physical reality seems to recede in proportion as man's symbolic activity advances. . . . He has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols or religious rites that he cannot see or know anything except by the interposition of this artificial medium."[3] Intuition, according to Kant, is an integral part--the basis, in fact--of human reason. However, there can be no such thing as "pure intuition" unless man lacks consciousness. Everything that we intuit is qualified by our experience, by everything else we know, by the symbols which we have previously formulated. In The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Cassirer says that "the regard of perception or intuition rests on the elements which are compared or in some way correlated, not on the manner, the mode, of the correlation. It is with the logical concept that

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[1] An Essay on Man, p. 24. [2] Ibid., p. 25.

[3] Ibid.

this mode of correlation first emerges."[1] Thus, although intuition may be the basis of rational thought, it is not a dynamic part of the thought process. According to Susanne Langer, intuition "is not a 'method' at all, but an event."[2] Once the event takes place, the rational process takes over. Langer does assert that intuition is "immediate,"[3] but this immediacy must be tempered by the idea that for man, response to an object or an experience is delayed. The longer a response is delayed, the less intuitive it becomes. Any immediate response is qualified by analysis of that response. As man imposes his conscious mind upon the symbolic result of the event (which, according to Jung, finds its source of perception in the unconscious) he weaves together a complex fabric of associations. Cassirer gives us an especially coherent explanation of the correlation between intuitive and rational thinking:

> The dividing line between intuition and concept is usually drawn so as to distinguish intuition as an immediate relation to the object from the mediated discursive relation of the concept. But the intuition itself is discursive in the sense that it never stops at the particular but strives toward a totality it never achieves in any other way than by running through a manifold of elements and finally gathering them into one regard. Yet over against this form of intuitive synthesis the concept establishes a higher potency of the discursive. It does not simply follow the fixed

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[1] The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, trans. Ralph Manheim, intro. Charles W. Hendel, Vol. 3 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953), p. 288.

[2] Feeling and Form (New York: Scribner's, 1953), p. 378.

[3] Ibid., p. 13.

> directives provided by the similarity of phenomena or by any other intuitive relation between them--it is no ready-made path but a function of pathfinding itself. Intuition follows set paths of combination, and herein consists its pure form and schematism. The concept, however, reaches out beyond these paths in the sense that it not only knows them but also points them out; it not only travels a road that is opened and known in advance but also helps to open it.[1]

Through intuition man formulates symbols; through rational analysis he categorizes these more immediately designated symbols and constructs vaster, more universal symbols. It might be concluded that the more educated a man is--the larger his frame of reference--the more "rational" he will tend to be. No man is lacking in either faculty; the only real distinction that we can make must be a matter of degree. Some men are more rational; some men are more intuitive. The truly rational man must consciously incorporate his ability to intuit in his thought process; he must recognize it as lying "at the base of all human mentality."[2] The man who does not trust his intuitions, who refuses to acknowledge the significance of his most spontaneous perceptions, risks the formulation of sterile and meaningless suppositions. Barrett, through an examination of the relation of existential thinking to the modern world, asserts that modern man is irrational. Man's reverence for scientific abstraction divorced from human

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[1] Symbolic Forms, p. 289.

[2] Langer, p. 378.

experience has rendered him sterile and impotent. He says that these "reasonable ideals" are "precariously situated . . . in relation to the subterranean forces of life. . . ,"[1] upon which, according to Jung, intuition depends. Barrett goes on to say that "contrary to the rationalist tradition, we now know that it is not his reason that makes man man, but rather that reason is a consequence of that which really makes him man,"[2] i.e., his ability to create symbols, which he must first do intuitively.

William Faulkner never explicitly defines the terms rational and intuitive; in fact he seldom, if ever, uses these specific words in his writing. He was far too interested in human behavior to reduce the workings of man's mind to abstractions. Exploration of the rational/intuitive juxtaposition is certainly not new with Faulkner; many writers have been interested in the problems which arise when man divorces concept from experience. This ideological conflict appears to be particularly prevalent among American writers; it is perhaps indicated best by the Romantic reaction against Calvinist doctrinarianism in the mid-nineteenth century. The juxtaposition of rationality and intuition has been examined by American writers in various guises; confrontations between men who are closer to the "subterranean forces of life" occur in the greater American novels. The central issue in Melville's

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[1]Barrett, p. 279. [2]Ibid.

Moby-Dick, which Faulkner considered to be "perhaps" the single greatest book in American literature (FU 15), is the conflict between Ahab and the white whale. Moby-Dick represents the vast power of natural forces; Ahab is demonically obsessed with controlling those forces. For him body and mind are entirely separate entities. Through his intellect he cuts himself off from the life force and is thus destroyed. Queequeg, the pagan harpooneer, stands as a contrast to Ahab; Queequeg's intuitive nature and his intellect work together, as evidenced by his "obstetric" rescue of Tashtego from the whale's head in the "Cistern and Buckets" chapter.[1]

The "head vs. heart" motif which runs throughout Nathaniel Hawthorne's fiction is a variant expression of the same theme. In The Scarlet Letter, for example, nature is consistently shown in opposition to the Puritan civilization. Roger Chillingworth, like Ahab, allows his intellect to obsess him until he becomes a kind of demon. He refuses to recognize, understand, or forgive the natural passion which prompted the love affair between Hester and Dimmesdale. The conflict within Arthur Dimmesdale is, ultimately, a conflict between his discursive role as a minister and his wholly natural response to Hester. Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn struggles with a similar contradiction in his perplexity as to what he should do about Jim. He must either give in to the dictates of

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[1]Moby-Dick, ed. Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker (New York: Norton, 1967), pp. 289-90.

Southern society and turn the runaway slave over to the authorities, or follow what he intuitively feels is right and remain an outlaw with Jim. As Huck tries, through praying, to force himself to submit to the social doctrine, he discovers the true nature of his problem:

> I was trying to make my mouth _say_ I would do the right thing and the clean thing, and go and write to that nigger's owner and tell where he was; but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie, and He knowed it. You can't pray a lie--I found that out.[1]

The honesty and integrity which Huck exhibits in making this crucial decision indicates another aspect of the rational/intuitive juxtaposition with which the more modern American writers have been deeply concerned--the distinction between what we _feel_ to be true and what we come to _think_, or _want to believe_, is true. In John Dos Passos' _U. S. A._, this problem emerges as a major theme, expressed primarily through the motif of language. Each of the narrative characters begins as a sort of artist (ranging from pitcher to poet); each ultimately fails to carry through his potential to a constructive end. In his youth J. Ward Moorehouse, perhaps the most extreme example, uses words to tell the truth, as every good artist must. As his interest turns to capitalistic gain, however, he begins to misuse words; he makes his mouth say what others want to hear, and his values themselves become false as a result. To various degrees the people of _U. S. A._ come to

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[1] _The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn_, ed. Sculley Bradley, et al. (New York: Norton: 1961), p. 167.

believe, through a process of rationalization, what they want to be true. The old heartfelt truths are forgotten in lieu of more attractive falsehoods. If "U. S. A. is the speech of the people,"[1] the tragedy implicit in the trilogy lies in misapplication of speech through distortion of words. Faulkner's Addie Bundren, in As I Lay Dying, focuses on a similar aspect of the difference between what a word really means and what it is channelled into meaning when she comes to realize that, for her husband, a word is "just a shape to fill a lack" (D 194). Anse Bundren knows the word "love," but he does not experience the feeling, the emotion, which the word names. We tend, in regarding words as abstractions, to forget that they are connected with very concrete objects and very human experiences.

Sherwood Anderson, whose influence upon Faulkner was perhaps greater than that of any of his contemporaries,[2] introduces his Winesburg, Ohio with a slightly different statement of the rational/intuitive "dichotomy," as it relates to truth. In "The Book of the Grotesque," the old man makes the narrator realize that "It was the truths that made the people grotesques. . . . It was his notion that the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a

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[1] U. S. A. (1930; rpt. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. vi.

[2] At Nagano, Faulkner remarked that "I think that he was the father of all my works. . . ," (FN 25).

grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood."[1] The "grotesque" man fails to recognize the fact (which through intuitive apprehensions he must recognize) that there are innumerable truths, and that they are true for all men. Faulkner's most rational characters isolate themselves; through their interest in constructing systems of belief and moral behavior they break the human bond, as do Ahab and Chillingworth. His more intuitive characters, on the other hand, tend to be more social; they seem to have an understanding, a comprehension, of the complexities of human nature which the more rational characters lack.

Thus Faulkner's characters range from those who are almost purely intuitive to those who reject intuition and attempt to construct elaborate systems of thought without it. I do not intend to construct any rigid categorizations of Faulkner's people; indeed, that would entirely defeat the purposed relevance of this paper. However, before venturing into a detailed study of Faulkner's fiction, it is helpful to make a few generalizations regarding his characters in view of the thematic pattern under discussion.

Those characters which may be designated as primarily intuitive appear to be, for the most part, the idiots, the children, the Negroes, and the majority of the women. Those which are primarily rational, on the other hand, are white

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[1] Winesburg, Ohio, intro. Malcolm Cowley (1919; rpt. New York: Viking, 1969), p. 25.

adult males who have a relatively high social status, or pretend to such a station. These male characters are primarily concerned with structuring and defining experience; they are theorists who plan, who design, and who attempt to act in accordance with their theories. They tend, however, to become trapped in and enmeshed by their own obsessions with ideological design. The more intuitive characters embody certain qualities which enable them to transcend the rigidity of rationality. They are frequently associated with images of earth, water, and the fluidity of motion. Whereas the rational characters attempt to manipulate experience, the intuitive characters flow with experience; they act in accordance with necessity rather than with design. Characters such as Lena Grove (Light in August), the woman of Old Man, Aleck Sander (Intruder in the Dust), Mollie Beauchamp ("Go Down, Moses"), and the Eula Varner of The Hamlet, are close to the earth, actually and symbolically. They are, for the most part, poor people who live from the soil, and who are thus closest to the "subterranean forces" of which Barrett speaks. They seem to "sense without knowing" (L 433), to believe without having to construct elaborate systems of evidence for substantiation of their responses to experience. On the other hand, characters such as Thomas Sutpen, Quentin Compson, Flem Snopes, and Gavin Stevens, are removed from the earth; they have either rejected or ignored the pull of the vital life force, the realm in which the more intuitive characters live, and are intent upon constructing elaborate moral and social systems according to

which they and others must live. They place the idiots, the children, the Negroes, and the women in a lower stratum from that in which they exist, and tend to view their ability to "reason" as a mark of superiority.

There are other characters, however, who are not so easily categorized; they constitute those among Faulkner's people who are the most successful as complete human beings. They deal with experience better than those mentioned above, and we tend to regard them as the most admirable of all Faulkner's characters. Their ability to succeed as human beings results from their ability to employ both intuition and reason not only in their reactions to experience, but in their shaping of experience as well. Lucas Beauchamp, Sam Fathers, Dilsey, Ned McCaslin, and particularly V. K. Ratliff are wholly integrated people; they serve as examples to the characters who surround them; and, ultimately, they escape the tragedies to which the less able characters are subject. Ratliff is perhaps the most important character in the Snopes trilogy; he is certainly the key to Faulkner's exploration of the rational/intuitive theme. For in Ratliff the two faculties are not only juxtaposed, they are merged; they work together so that he has the most complete understanding of the events which take place in the trilogy.

This thematic pattern runs throughout Faulkner's fiction; however, it becomes increasingly evident in the latter part of his career. In the early novels the

juxtaposition of the rational and the intuitive as theme is overshadowed by other themes which are beyond the scope of this paper. The Sound and the Fury (1929) and Absalom, Absalom! (1936) are generally acclaimed as Faulkner's greatest novels; both belong to his early period, although the latter may be regarded as the first of a group of transitional novels. In commenting upon the decline of Faulkner's "great period," Edmond Volpe suggests as a possible reason that "once Faulkner worked his way out of the personal despair recorded in his early and greatest works, his novels tended to be inspired by idea rather than feeling."[1] This is a valid explanation, I think, particularly in regard to the concept which is the subject of this study. In his later novels and stories Faulkner deals much more specifically with the problems confronted by the man who is primarily either rational or intuitive. Because A Fable is concerned almost exclusively with idea, Norman Podhoretz's assertion that the novel is "dull," "tortured," and, above all, "pretentious,"[2] may be correct. I tend to disagree, but such disagreement must be reserved for a later chapter. However, the characters are certainly not so alive as they are when Faulkner returns to Yoknapatawpha in

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[1] A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1964), p. 252.

[2] "William Faulkner and the Problem of War: His Fable of Faith," Commentary (Sept. 1954); rpt. in Robert Penn Warren, ed., Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 243.

The Town, The Mansion, and The Reivers. Here also he is primarily concerned with presenting a more or less philosophical dilemma with which modern man must deal.

Faulkner's best expression of the rational/intuitive theme is found in the Snopes trilogy; it represents the culmination, the final exploration of a thematic pattern which permeates all of his fiction, and it is toward an examination of these three novels, The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion, that this study is ultimately directed. Most critics discuss the Snopes novels in terms of conflict. According to Cleanth Brooks this conflict emerges through varying concepts of love and honor.[1] Warren Beck and James Watson view the trilogy as revealing theme through the manners in which various characters move and incorporate motion.[2] Olga Vickery asserts, more explicitly, that Faulkner has set up a contrast between sex and economics. She says that the major conflict involves "the two primary modes of human survival, the one natural and the other social."[3] Vickery's terminology, however, limits interpretation in that it excludes the motivations of certain major characters--most notably V. K. Ratliff, Gavin Stevens,

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[1]William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), p. 177.

[2]See Beck, Man in Motion: Faulkner's Trilogy (Madison: Univ. of Wisc. Press, 1963) and Watson, The Snopes Dilemma: Faulkner's Trilogy (Coral Gables, Fla.: Univ. of Miami Press, 1968).

[3]The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation (Baton Rouge: La. State Univ. Press, 1959), p. 167.

and Charles Mallison. If one views the conflict--which certainly does exist as the primary structural sustainer of the thematic content of all three novels--in terms of the various casts of mind of the characters, however, far more of the thematic thrust of the trilogy can be incorporated. Florence Leaver comes closest to defining the main conflict in terms of rational and intuitive modes of thinking when she says that "the advance of the picaro, Flem Snopes, is structured as it is largely because of the various types of mind set against him."[1] She views the conflict in The Hamlet as revealing the "accepted theme of humanism versus modernism,"[2] and goes on to delineate what she sees as "a hierarchy of minds represented by the characters in the novel. . . ."[3] In defining the central conflict within the Snopes trilogy, however, one must consider of paramount importance Faulkner's own repeated assertion that the true artist of today writes about "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself. . . ."[4]

Every man by his very nature possesses the faculties of rationality and intuition. Although in most men one of the two emerges as a predominant trait, the "subterranean forces" which sustain man and the higher, more abstract

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[1] "The Structure of The Hamlet," Twentieth Century Literature, I (July 1955), p. 77.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] "Nobel Prize Address" (FW 131).

faculty of reason which he possesses are eternally in conflict. This juxtaposition of ostensibly opposite casts of mind incorporates and encompasses various lesser conflicts, such as those which Brooks, Beck, Watson, and Vickery point out. This paper is an attempt to delineate, through a study of Faulkner's later novels, this essential conflict in terms of the juxtaposition of the rational and the intuitive elements of man's mind, both as opposing elements represented by opposed characters, and as rationality and intuition co-exist within single characters. The manners in which Faulkner's people deal with this innate conflict predicates the very quality of their existence.

CHAPTER II

"THE USURPATION OF AN HEIRSHIP"[1]

Faulkner opens The Hamlet with a short history of Frenchman's Bend (the setting of the novel) which, though brief, is instrumental in setting the tone for the events of the novel as well as suggesting to the reader the general character of its rural inhabitants. Frenchman's Bend takes its name from the Old Frenchman's place, "the gutted shell of an enormous house" (H 3) and the land, which once belonged to a foreigner whose

> name was forgotten, his pride but a legend about the land he had wrested from the jungle and tamed as a monument to that appellation which those who came after him . . . could not even read, let alone pronounce, and which now had nothing to do with any once-living man at all--his dream and his pride now dust with the lost dust of his anonymous bones. . . . (H 4)

The Hamlet is similar to most of Faulkner's novels in the sense that it is characterized by an undercurrent of Southern tradition. One element of the predicament of most of Faulkner's major characters has to do with a reluctance or an inability to live in the present because they cannot relieve themselves of an obsession with the past. Each of these characters ultimately is destroyed or destroys himself as a result

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[1]H, p. 89.

of becoming immersed in a conflict between past and present, or in what T. Y. Greet refers to as Faulkner's "early conflict between legend and reality,"[1] which may be viewed as a variation of the conflict between intuition and reason. The fact that the Snopes trilogy begins with an emphatic distinction between the past--which has assumed the proportions of a myth in the minds of the people of Frenchman's Bend--and the present, sets up at least one aspect of the dichotomy which runs throughout the trilogy. The Frenchman's legend serves as a sort of stage against which Flem Snopes--the thoroughly modern man-machine--is ultimately thrust in relief. If what Flem represents, however, is in contrast to the background against which he moves, there is a strong irony present in the fact that he is peculiarly akin to such men as the Frenchman upon whose actions the legends of Yoknapatawpha are based.

The traits which characters such as the Frenchman and Flem Snopes most strongly exhibit--spiritual blindness, violent rigidity in values, inability to love, self-isolation--are symptomatic of a mind so rational that it consciously attempts to reject any association with the intuitive world of practical experience. They are people who, in various ways and degrees, seek to manipulate, calculate, and pass judgments

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[1] "The Theme and Structure of Faulkner's The Hamlet," PMLA (Sept. 1957); rpt. in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960), p. 331.

which are usually based upon rigid self-imposed codes. Faulkner contrasts them with characters who are primarily intuitive--in close touch with the "subterranean forces of life,"[1] who move fluidly in accordance with necessity, and for whom there is little or no distinguishable conflict between Southern tradition and the present. Barrett states that "reason itself if cut off from the concrete life of ordinary mankind is bound to decay."[2] This is precisely what happens to those characters who dedicate themselves to a rational ideal without regard for the human heart; throughout Faulkner's work supreme rationality is the arch-crime.

Among those novels written before The Hamlet, Absalom, Absalom! is the one in which Faulkner deals most specifically with the problems inherent in the rational mind. Not one of the characters in Absalom (with the exception of Shreve McCannon, who is rather an objective observer than an actor in the events of the novel) escapes destruction as a result of some variety of rigidity in thought and action. Even Clytie and Judith, the two who come closest to breaking out of the chain of tragic events engendered by their father, are possessed of an indomitable will inherited from him. Until the publication of The Hamlet in 1940, and the entrance of

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[1]William Barrett, Irrational Man, p. 279.

[2]Ibid., p. 135.

Flem Snopes onto the Yoknapatawpha scene, Thomas Sutpen stands as Faulkner's supreme embodiment of rational man.[1] The actual components of the Frenchman's legend, only vague to the people of Frenchman's Bend, can be filled in by the dream and the actions of Thomas Sutpen who, like the Frenchman, "came out of nowhere and without warning upon the land with a band of strange niggers and built a plantation--(Tore violently a plantation, Miss Rosa Coldfield says)--(A 8) although, according to John Longley, Sutpen actually "exists only in the voices"[2] of the narrators of his story. As in Frenchman's Bend, the only concrete remains of Sutpen's dream are the gutted mansion and the sterile land.

In order to understand the legend of Frenchman's Bend and the significance it holds for the reader of The Hamlet, one need not know the story of the fall of the Frenchman. Faulkner indicates clearly enough that his tale would be only Thomas Sutpen's retold. Interestingly enough, for all his emphasis upon the anonymity of the Frenchman in the opening pages of The Hamlet, Faulkner later gives him a name. In Requiem for a Nun (1951) he mentions, in a rambling history of Yoknapatawpha, a Louis Grenier,

> from Frenchman's Bend (his plantation: his manor, his kitchens and stables and kennels and slave quarters and gardens and promenades and fields which a hundred years

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[1]The supreme general of A Fable (1954) is directly analogous to Flem Snopes and Sutpen in this respect. This novel, which is set far from Yoknapatawpha, will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

[2]The Tragic Mask: A Study of Faulkner's Heroes (1957; rpt. Chapel Hill, N. C.: Univ. of N. C. Press, 1963), p. 206.

> later will have vanished, his name and his blood too, leaving nothing but the name of his plantation and his own fading corrupted legend like a thin layer of the native ephemeral yet inevictable dust on a section of country surrounding a little lost paintless crossroads store). . . . (RN 196)

He later indicates that Grenier and Sutpen worked together wresting their empires (RN 200), thus linking the legends even more closely.

The purpose of this discussion is to delineate the motivations and character traits of the inhabitants of The Hamlet through contrast with the components of the legend which forms the background of their movements. I have established the connection between Thomas Sutpen and the Frenchman in order to provide a basis for analysis of the panorama of characters in the Snopes trilogy as they act and react in terms of event and experience. Sutpen's history serves significantly as a prelude to the action of The Hamlet. If one draws such an analogy and sees it as valid in terms of a major theme within the Faulkner canon, the history of Frenchman's Bend becomes a foreshadowing of the almost apocalyptic rise of Flem Snopes.

Thomas Sutpen's "design"--that ideal, abstract in the sense that it ultimately was divorced from the practical level of experience, which drove him, through sheer force of will, to destruction--should come under primary consideration because of what it tells us about the man. The "design," which remains for the narrators of Absalom, Absalom! as much an abstraction

as the "dream" of the Frenchman does to his "heirs-at-large" (H 3), can be permanently established only through blood lineage, through sons born by an "incidental" wife (A 263). It is not so much the "design" itself which destroys Sutpen as it is the means whereby he attempts to realize it. Cleanth Brooks calls Sutpen a "'planner' who works by blueprint and on a schedule. He is rationalistic and scientific, not religious, not even superstitious."[1] He loves nothing, but is driven by a violent force of will, as Orestes is driven by the Furies, to wreak vengeance upon a system and tradition as abstract and meaningless as is the "tradition" which he attempts to create. Unconscious as he is of the "old verities and truths of the heart,"[2] Sutpen commits all the most grievous sins that exist in Faulkner's world. Acquisition of land is as paramount to his "design" as is the founding of a dynasty. It is this necessity which causes him to commit what is perhaps the most heinous and costly error of his career--the rape of the land.

As Faulkner tells us in "The Bear," it was Sutpen who originally bought the land from the old Chickasaw chief Ikkemotubbe (G 225) which was to make up the northwest corner of Yoknapatawpha County, and later sold it to Major de Spain. Isaac McCaslin, who eventually inherits this part of the

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[1] The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 306.

[2] "Nobel Prize Address," (FW 131).

Mississippi wilderness, rationalizes his reasons, in "The Bear," for "repudiating" the land for which he is responsible. He reasons that he "cant repudiate it. It was never mine to repudiate" (G 256) because it had never been Ikkemotubbe's to sell to Thomas Sutpen. Ike says that "on the instant when Ikkemotubbe discovered, realised, that he could sell it for money, on that instant it ceased ever to have been his forever. . . (G 257). The "wilderness theme" in Faulkner's fiction has undergone much critical scrutiny; there is little doubt that it is of great importance throughout the Yoknapatawpha novels. Faulkner explores this theme most thoroughly in Go Down, Moses, wherein "The Bear" functions as the central episode. As this novel was copyrighted in 1940, the same year in which The Hamlet was published, a suggestion that Faulkner was working with a similar theme in the latter novel appears to be valid. Within the "wilderness theme," it is the concept of ownership, and numerous problems connoted thereby, which relates most specifically to the world of The Hamlet.

Ike McCaslin, continuing with his explanation to his cousin of his reasons for repudiating the land which is now legally his, denies the concept of ownership:

> He created man to be His overseer on the earth and to hold suzerainty over the earth and the animals on it in His name, not to hold for himself and his descendants inviolable title forever, generation after generation, to the oblongs and squares of the earth, but to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood, and all the fee He asked was pity and humility and sufferance and endurance and the sweat of his face for bread. (G 257)

Whether or not Ike acts according to his beliefs remains one of the central issues implicit in "The Bear"; nevertheless his words have bearing on the entire span of the Yoknapatawpha novels. In contrast to Ike's quandary, which revolves around the question of man's right or ability to own anything, Sutpen stands as a monument to the concept that a man has the right to possess whatever the magnitude of his cleverness and courage enables him to exploit (A 242). In his imagination Quentin Compson watches Sutpen, with his "band of strange niggers" (A 9),

> overrun suddenly the hundred square miles of tranquil and astonished earth and drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless Nothing and clap them down like cards upon a table beneath the up-palm immobile and pontific, creating the Sutpen's Hundred, the Be Sutpen's Hundred like the oldentime Be Light. (A 9)

The analogy between Ike McCaslin's concept of the Creator and Quentin's vision of Sutpen-the-Creator is clear. Although Sutpen and the Frenchman never realized their dreams, never became a part of the Southern aristocracy of Faulkner's world, there is little difference between them and those who did succeed. The Sartorises, the Compsons, and the de Spains merely managed to establish their dynasties prior to the Civil War so that they were recognized. Faulkner indicates, at least through the story of Jason Lycurgus Compson (SF 406-11), that their origins or motivations were akin to those of Thomas Sutpen. The legend of the Frenchman centralizes, in an archetypal fashion, the role of the Yoknapatawpha aristocrat

aristocrat and thus serves as a locus from which the events of The Hamlet spiral. Furthermore, it prepares the reader for the "'mythic' atmosphere" which Cleanth Brooks attributes to the novel.[1]

From the world of established exploiters with which Faulkner was deeply concerned in his pre-Snopes novels, he turns, in The Hamlet, to the world of the exploited whites[2]--the tenant farmers who people Frenchman's Bend. The variety of attitudes of the major characters toward the earth and those things associated with it reveals a complex structure of moral and ethical patterns according to which they act and think.

At the outset of The Hamlet most of Frenchman's Bend is owned by Will Varner, who leases out portions of his land to tenant farmers. It is Varner who is lord of this part of the country: he owns even the Old Frenchman's place and is pictured sitting alone on the porch of the mansion "against his background of fallen baronial splendor" (H 6). Although he is corrupt, his dishonesty is relatively harmless; he is simply "shrewd secret and merry, of a Rabelaisian turn of mind" (H 5), a man whose position as "the chief man of the country" (H 5) is fully acknowledged by the other inhabitants of Frenchman's Bend. In 1902 as the novel opens, there

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[1]The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 170.

[2]In his earlier novels, Faulkner deals to a large extent with the Negro in the role of the exploited. In the world of the Snopes, however, black people are conspicuously lacking. Here Faulkner places primary emphasis upon the poor white--a social group which he has dealt with in depth only in As I Lay Dying.

exists a distinct and unchallenged hierarchy from which Faulkner gradually moves downward as he introduces his characters. Will Varner has replaced the Frenchman as "baron" over the realm; the "itinerant sewing-machine agent named Ratliff" (H 6), Varner's sole confidant, serves as a sort of chief counselor; finally there is Jody Varner, manager of and heir to his father's domain, "the perennial and immortal Best Man, the apotheosis of the masculine Singular" (H 7).

It is upon these pillars of the established order that Abner Snopes descends, silently and without warning. Merely through contrast in physical description Faulkner suggests the essential conflict which runs throughout the trilogy. In opposition to the pleasant, garrulous ease of the Varners and Ratliff, Ab Snopes stands "with a curious planted stiffness" (H 7) and speaks with a voice "rusty from infrequent use" (H 7), "lifeless," and "dead" (H 8). Here is a man rigid, implacable, determined, and ruthless. This is the same Ab of the earlier story, "Barn Burning," whom Ted E. Boyle says "exercised no mind and possesses no feeling; he exercises only will and hence becomes a kind of one-dimensional emblem of that faculty isolated from the others."[1] Even so, Ab might have fit into the routine of Frenchman's Bend; other tenant farmers such as Henry Armstid are possessed of a similar degree of bitterness. It is Jody Varner's foolish over-

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[1]"The Wounded Will of Faulkner's Barn Burner," Modern Fiction Studies, 2 (Spring-Winter 1965-66), pp. 185-86.

reaction to Vernon Tull's explanation of the barn-burning incident involving Ab which opens the door to an invasion and usurpation which otherwise could never have been effected so easily.

The opposition to Varner's establishment in the hamlet is a force which has become, in the words of Faulkner, his characters, and his critics, an abstraction called Snopesism. Within the context of Faulkner's trilogy this term is well-defined if highly complex; for most of his critics, however, it unfortunately remains an abstraction. Snopesism, if it implies rapacity, ruthlessness, violence, and general inhumanity, cannot be applied to all Snopeses. The adult members of the "tribe" do, however, possess certain qualities in common, and Snopesism can at least be initially defined along these lines. Perhaps their most important characteristic is their rootlessness. Even though Ab, father to one and uncle to the others, does have a history, it is one imbued with disappointment and alienation. As poor tenant farmers with no ties within the community of Frenchman's Bend, they have nothing to lose and, for those who are enterprising, everything to gain. The chief members of the clan have inherited Ab's indomitable will, a faculty initially akin to intuition, but which becomes in Ab a drive which excludes human understanding, and which ultimately drives them through Frenchman's Bend into Jefferson, the heart of Yoknapatawpha. As first viewed by the opposition, Snopesism threatens the community with a "general

social and moral pollution."[1] Faulkner pits the invading "out-group" against the established "in-group"[2] in the opening pages of The Hamlet; as the panorama of the trilogy unfolds, however, Snopesism gradually becomes what Volpe calls "Flemism,"[3] and the other Snopeses emerge as distinct individuals, most of them quite different from Ab's son.

In response to a question at the University of Virginia, Faulkner commented that "Of the Snopeses, I'm terrified" (FU 197). And one must acknowledge that, in The Hamlet at least, Ab, Flem, and Mink Snopes are frightening; they represent a threat which is peculiarly modern in that they have no ties with the past and no obligation to tradition. The old order, of which Will Varner is a remnant, cannot cope with them. The man who will combat them must also be distinctly modern, but with an understanding and perception which encompasses and outdistances both factions.

Once the initial conflict between Jody Varner and Ab Snopes is set up, Faulkner turns to a more in-depth description of the enemy of Snopesism. If Will Varner is the ultimate target and Jody Varner the tool through which the Snopeses will work, then it is the third member of the established order, V. K. Ratliff, who represents the opposition. In August of 1945 Faulkner wrote to Malcolm Cowley that "'Spotted Horses'

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[1]Edmond Volpe, A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner, p. 307.

[2]Volpe's terms, p. 308. [3]Ibid., p. 309.

had created a character I fell in love with: the itinerant sewing-machine agent named Suratt. Later a man of that name turned up at home, so I changed my man to Ratliff. . . ."[1] This character is one of the few of Faulkner's people who has that "quality in man that prevails," and who "will never stop trying to get rid of Snopes" (FU 34). In contrast to Ab Snopes, Ratliff speaks in a "pleasant, lazy, equable voice which you did not discern at once to be even more shrewd than humorous" (H 13); he is "pleasant, affable, courteous, anecdotal and impenetrable" (H 13). Whereas Ab is rigid in thought and behavior, Ratliff is entirely flexible. Faulkner has commented that he "will take what's now and do the best he can with it because he is--possesses what you might call a moral, spiritual eupepsia, that his digestion is good, all right, nothing alarms him" (FU 253). Of all the inhabitants of Frenchman's Bend Ratliff is the most intelligent, the most shrewd, and the most perceptive. Furthermore, as he alone knew Ab before he was "curdled" (H 48), Ratliff has the greatest insight into the Snopes phenomenon. He is the natural candidate for leader of the anti-Snopes faction.

The essential nature of the conflict between the Snopeses and the inhabitants of Frenchman's Bend is analogous to the conflict between rationality and intuition. Ratliff's primary qualification for his role as fighter of Snopeses is

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[1] The Faulkner-Cowley File, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking, 1966), p. 26.

that of all the characters in the trilogy he best incorporates both the rational and intuitive faculties. He does indeed have his troubles with Snopesism, but he endures, prevails in the struggle through his unique capacity for blending a rational intellect with an intuitive nature into a frame of mind that results in what one might term understanding. In his Treatise on Human Nature, David Hume says that "In every judgment which we can form concerning probability, as well as concerning knowledge, we ought always to correct the first judgment, derived from the nature of the object, by another judgment, derived from the nature of the understanding."[1] This is just the sort of thinking process which Ratliff is able to incorporate; even Gavin Stevens in The Town and The Mansion becomes too embroiled in subjective involvement to make discerning judgments based finally upon understanding--instead, it is Ratliff who enables him to understand.

Ratliff is at ease within any social group. His buoyancy and personal fluidity is exemplified by his chosen vocation. As a sewing-machine salesman Faulkner designates him as a man in tune with industrial progress; as a travelling salesman, a sort of drummer, he proves himself to be socially fluid as well. More important than his sewing-machine trade, however, is his movement throughout northern Mississippi

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[1]The Essential David Hume, ed. Robert Paul Wolff (New York: Mentor, 1969), p. 101.

> retailing from house to house the news of his four counties with the ubiquity of a newspaper and carrying personal messages from mouth to mouth about weddings and funerals and the preserving of vegetables and fruits with the reliability of a postal service. (H 13)

Ratliff thus serves as the chief medium of communication throughout the area in which he works. Fond as he is of talking and of telling a tall tale, he never misuses the language--he tells the truth as he sees it; he listens, digests, and then speaks.

Once he sets up Ratliff as a formidable opponent for any alien or dangerous force, Faulkner proceeds to draw us a vivid picture of the personal embodiment of Snopesism, and to plot out the course of his invasion of Frenchman's Bend. The Hamlet is the only Faulkner novel in which he relies to a large extent upon physical description of his characters. Perhaps this is because, as Brooks suggests, the conflicts represented by the juxtapositions of certain characters are almost allegorical.[1] Throughout the Snopes novels, and especially in The Hamlet, the major figures are devoid of the intense psychological problems which pervade the other great novels and supply a sort of internal characterization. The problems which the people of the Snopes trilogy face are more metaphysical, having to do with intellectual motivation and process, and are better indicated by external manner, or even symbolized by external features and attitudes. For instance

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[1]Brooks, The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 172, discusses the union of Flem and Eula in terms of allegory: for further comment see page 47 of this paper.

Faulkner describes Flem, on his first day as clerk at the Varner store, as

> a thick squat soft man of no establishable age between twenty and thirty, with a broad still face containing a tight seam of mouth stained slightly at the corners with tobacco, and eyes the color of stagnant water, and projecting from among the other features in startling and sudden paradox, a tiny predatory nose like the beak of a small hawk. It was as though the original nose had been left off by the original designer or craftsman and the unfinished job taken over by someone of a radically different school or perhaps by some viciously maniacal humorist or perhaps by one who had had only time to clap into the center of the face a frantic and desperate warning. (H 52)

Whereas Quentin Compson, Rosa Coldfield, Isaac McCaslin, Joe Christmas, and others reveal themselves through monologue, the characters in The Hamlet, particularly Flem Snopes and Eula Varner, are molded in terms of a controlling idea. Faulkner carries this device to such an extreme in A Fable that the novel itself is an allegory; in The Hamlet the writer takes an omniscient point of view, but his omniscience is modified through the character of Ratliff who is allowed to relate certain narrative sections such as the Pat Stamper episode.[1] Because of the point of view which Faulkner takes here, we know immediately what sort of character Flem Snopes is; we are not asked to wade through a series of interior monologues to find out. Flem's physical features reflect the inner man: the "broad still face," the "tight seam of mouth," "eyes the

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[1]It is interesting to note that Ratliff originally narrated the "Spotted Horses" story: when Faulkner incorporated the episode into The Hamlet, however, he altered the point of view and narrated it himself, probably in order to confirm Ratliff's crucial role as character as opposed to commentator.

color of stagnant water," and the "tiny predatory nose" indicate very concretely that Flem Snopes is a potentially powerful man, formidable in that his power lies in an intellect which excludes feeling. Faulkner further emphasizes the visual picture by labeling Flem's nose "a frantic and desperate warning." The danger inherent in Flem lies in the fact that he is entirely removed from the "subterranean forces of life,"[1] from the undercurrent of emotion and feeling which pervades the lives of the other inhabitants of Frenchman's Bend. Longley states that Flem has "a power and capacity for evil far beyond that of Popeye and Jason Compson";[2] they at least are driven by neuroses which place them on a human level. Even Thomas Sutpen, ruthless and dedicated to abstraction as he is, is a man of fierce passion. Flem has no neurosis, no passion, no feeling whatever for his fellow man. He "is exceptional in that he turns human impulse and emotion to his own profit and moves utterly unconcerned over the human wreckage that occurs."[3] Sutpen is a "demon" in Miss Rosa's mind; Flem Snopes is a monster, a sort of savage mutation, for everyone with whom he comes in contact, with the possible exception of those lesser Snopeses--Lump and I. O.--who follow him. Because he is entirely devoid of feeling, of understanding,

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[1]Barrett, p. 279. [2]Longley, p. 151.

[3]Ibid.

of intuition, Flem stands as a purely rational being. Faulkner gives him the proportion of an archetype--he is "shapeless, portentous, without age" (H 61)--an embodiment of pure logic in its most destructive form. Flem is not intelligent; he is the supreme designer, calculator, manipulator. At first he merely waits for an opportunity and takes advantage of it; later he calculates and creates his opportunities. He is Faulkner's prime representative of that variety of man which Jung terms "the Aryan bird of prey with his insatiable lust to lord it in every land."[1]

Once Flem's character is established, events in the novel move rapidly. As the chief Snopes ascends in power, he brings in his troop of cousins to hold his acquisitions; they invade Frenchman's Bend, in Faulkner's words, "like ants or like mold on cheese" (FU 193). Although it actually takes Flem five years[2] to gain complete control of the hamlet, the time seems much shorter as Faulkner juxtaposes events in quick succession; all but Flem's marriage to Eula and his acquisition of the Old Frenchman's place occurs within the "Flem" section of the novel. His personal target is Will Varner's "empire." Once he is clerk at the store, he assumes the paraphanalia of respectability, particularly the black

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[1]Modern Man in Search of a Soul, trans. W. S. Dent and Cary F. Baynes (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1933), p. 213.

[2]Volpe has worked out a Snopes chronology, which appears in his Appendix, p. 401.

bow-tie, "a tiny viciously depthless cryptically balanced splash like an enigmatic punctuation symbol against the expanse of white shirt which gave him Jody Varner's look of ceremonial heterodoxy raised to its tenth power" (H 58).

A little more than a year later, Snopes has taken over the village blacksmith shop, the cotton gin, and the store itself. "Jody Varner is relegated to keeping the store and Flem is handling the Varner accounts";[1] he has also moved into the Varner household. Furthermore, Flem has acquired "a herd of good Herefords" (H 62) and "some two hundred acres of land, with buildings" (H 73) during this time. He is interested in land for a simpler though far more abstract reason than Sutpen or the Frenchman. Their dreams were extremely complex--Flem has no "dream," only an objective. Land is the most concrete commodity in Yoknapatawpha County, but Flem wants it only for profit. He has no interest in founding a dynasty or creating a tradition; he only wants to make money--the most abstract and essentially the most meaningless of all commodities. Money is so abstract, in fact, that it cannot truly be termed a "commodity." Sutpen and the Frenchman have been called "criminal" in their rape of the land. Flem's exploitation is a result of logic rather than of passion, and his crime is far greater than theirs because he denies that land has any value or meaning except in cold cash. For him there "Aint no benefit in farming" (H 23), in working the land himself; but there

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[1]Ibid., p. 401.

is benefit in holding the land and profiting from the sweat of other men.

The Snopes invasion actually occurs in two stages. First is the entrance of Ab, and the establishment of Flem's initial position as clerk in the Varner store. The secondary invasion, involving Flem's cousins, occurs in tandem with his rise to power and serves as a sort of occupational army to guard his conquests. First the "equable" (H 71) open-faced Eck and I. O. with his "talkative weasel's face" (H 64) take over the village blacksmith shop. Next I. O. assumes the position of schoolmaster, ludicrous because of "his voice voluble and rapid and meaningless like something talking to itself about nothing in a deserted cavern" (H 65). We find that Mink, who later proves to be the most formidable Snopes of all, is his cousin's tenant farming a small plot of land. Finally the lesser cousins appear: Ike, the idiot, who works for Mrs. Littlejohn, and Lump, who appears in time to take over Flem's role when he goes to Texas, and whom Ratliff refers to as a "forgery" (H 201) of his cousin.

Oddly enough, we hear of this influx of Snopeses (as well as of Flem's maneuvers) not through Ratliff, who has dedicated himself to "Snopes-watching," but second-hand through Tull and Bookwright, at the same time that Ratliff himself hears the news. For the anti-Snopes champion has been in a Memphis hospital undergoing surgery, and in his sister's home recovering for a number of months; by the time

he returns, Flem and his tribe are established. It is particularly significant, in view of Faulkner's expressed faith in Ratliff's "moral, spiritual eupepsia," that his ailment happens to be occasioned by a malfunctioning gall-bladder. Whether or not Faulkner intended Ratliff's bladder trouble to be viewed symbolically, it does foreshadow both his intense dislike of Snopeses and his fallibility in coping with them. At any rate, it is Snopesism which lures Ratliff back into action ("'So you got well, hah,' /Jody/ said. 'I got busy,' Ratliff said, . ." (H 78). From this point forward he asserts his position as chief protagonist in the novel, and proceeds to attempt to outwit Flem, the now firmly entrenched antagonist.

After Book One Flem fades out of the forefront of the novel, but he remains in the background, always the arch-antagonist. Volpe says that even though many characters have no contact with Flem, "the book as a whole is unquestionably unified, each episode revealing directly or indirectly the character of the central figure."[1] I feel, however, that the character of Flem is quite clearly drawn in the opening pages of the novel; he is not a complex figure, but possesses a relatively uncomplicated logical faculty which asserts itself in a pattern of behavior which repeats itself with increasing intensity throughout the trilogy. It is rather the other characters who are revealed through contrast to and

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[1]Volpe, p. 307.

juxtaposition with Flem, the embodiment of exclusive rationality. Volpe does go on to say that "Each character and incident in the novel serves as a moral or emotional contrast to Flem."[1]

Once Ratliff is established as Snopesism's antagonist, Faulkner presents a parade of characters whose various natures are revealed against the backdrop of the Snopes invasion. The first of these is Eula Varner, who stands as an absolute in direct contrast to Flem. As he is an embodiment of cold logic, Eula is an embodiment of hot subterranean urges and of intuitive movement. In a magnificent passage which one cannot help but compare with his earlier description of Flem, Faulkner tells us that

> her entire appearance suggested some symbology out of the old Dionysic times--honey in sunlight and bursting grapes, the writhen bleeding of the crushed fecundated vine beneath the hard rapacious trampling goat-hoof. She seemed to be not a living integer of her contemporary scene, but rather to exist in a teeming vacuum in which her days followed one another as though behind sound-proof glass, where she seemed to listen in sullen bemusement, with a weary wisdom heired of all mammalian maturity, to the enlarging of her own organs. (H 95)

Eula is described by William Van O'Connor as "fruition's center. . . . She is fertility, the pagan ripening of spring and summer."[2] She is far more than this for Faulkner, however; her introduction into The Hamlet both clarifies and embellishes

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[1]Ibid., p. 310.

[2]The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1954), p. 119.

the essential conflict implicit in the novel. Karl Zink comments that "Life, for Faulkner, originates in and is limited to the mysteriously living surface of the Earth."[1] Eula is an archetypal embodiment of teeming life forces. As Flem stands for pure logic, Eula stands for pure intuition: "there was nothing in books here or anywhere else that she would ever need to know" (H 114). Although Eula may be described as "mindless" she is not, as Samuel Yorks claims, "amoral."[2] She is "mindless" only in that she is not rational or abstract; she is the very antithesis of rigidity. Furthermore, she is inversely analogous to Flem, as those characters who come in contact with Eula are judged according to how they react to her, perfectly in tune as she is with natural forces. As Brooks states, "Eula sums up a central aspect of the love theme that runs, with variations, throughout The Hamlet."[3]

During the course of this first Snopes novel, Eula becomes involved to one degree or another with four men. The first is her brother Jody, "the jealous seething eunuch priest" (H 115), whose stupid conventionality blinds him to Eula's nature as his lack of insight allows Flem to dupe him

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[1]"Faulkner's Garden: Woman and the Immemorial Earth," Modern Fiction Studies, 2 (Fall 1956), p. 139.

[2]"Faulkner's Woman: The Peril of Mankind," Arizona Quarterly, 17 (Spring 1961), i, p. 119.

[3]Brooks, The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 181.

and to usurp his position as the Varner heir. The second, and perhaps the most revealing in terms of the theme under discussion, is the village school teacher Labove. Labove is, as Brooks suggests, "another of /Faulkner's/ many studies in Southern Puritanism."[1] He is initially described as

> a man who was not thin so much as actually gaunt, with straight black hair coarse as a horse's tail and high Indian cheekbones and quiet pale hard eyes and the long nose of thought but with the slightly curved nostrils of pride and the thin lips of secret and ruthless ambition. It was a forensic face, the face of invincible conviction in the power of words as a principle worth dying for if necessary. A thousand years ago it would have been a monk's, a militant fanatic who would have turned his uncompromising back upon the world with actual joy. . . . (H 105-06)

Like Christmas and Sutpen, Labove is a man obsessed--a man so rational that instinctive sexuality cannot be allowed its natural role in his life without destroying him. Brooks comments that even Labove's uncontrollable desire for Eula "is a special kind of lust, a lust in the head as well as in the glands";[2] he sees in her the old mythical goddesses out of his Horace and Thucydides. Yet his rigid Puritan cast of mind forces Labove to rebel against his instinctive desire: he must relegate it to intellectual associations.

Faulkner vividly draws a contrast between what Labove and Eula represent when he describes her as "crossing the threshold" and bringing "into the bleak, ill-lighted, poorly-heated room dedicated to the harsh functioning of Protestant

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[1]Ibid., p. 175. [2]Ibid., p. 176.

primary education a moist blast of spring's liquorish corruption, a pagan triumphal prostration before the supreme primal uterus" (H 114). But Labove's asceticism fails him in the face of such blatant sexual fertility; he attacks Eula, is rebuffed in devastating fashion, and leaves Frenchman's Bend forever once he realizes that Jody will not defend his sister's virtue because "She never told him at all. She didn't even forget to. She doesn't even know anything happened that was worth mentioning" (H 127). Labove is analogous to Flem in his rationality; however, where Flem is all cold logic, the school teacher possesses intelligence. Even though he cannot cope with his own intuitive responses, he sees in Eula

> the fine land rich and fecund and foul and eternal and impervious to him who claimed title to it, oblivious, drawing to itself tenfold the quantity of living seed its owner's whole life could have secreted and compounded, producing a thousandfold the harvest he could ever hope to gather and save. (H 119)

Even though Labove achieves this level of insight, he cannot apply his knowledge to his behavior because reliance upon intuitive knowledge is alien to his basic nature. As Watson suggests, "Like Flem, who has become a storekeeper, Labove has forsaken the land and farming and forfeited, thereby, the right to plow. His attack on Eula thus results in his own figurative emasculation."[1]

It is Hoake McCarron, the unthinking embodiment of male sexuality and potency who finally wins Eula. McCarron

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[1]The Snopes Dilemma (Coral Gables, Fla.: Univ. of Miami Press, 1968), p. 36.

comes and goes quickly; he is almost characterless, but Eula recognizes him as her destined mate. It is not a true love-relationship, but the sexual act itself which must be consummated: "It was as if she really knew what instant, moment, she was reserved for, even if not his name and face, and was waiting for that moment rather than merely for the time for the eating to start, as she seemed to be" (H 129).

Once Eula's fertility is visibly proven, she is married to Flem. This union is a ludicrous sacrifice; it is ironic, and yet mythically consistent. Labove's prophecy of her inevitable fate is as accurate and as unavoidable as an Apollonian oracle:

> He could almost see the husband which she would someday have. He would be a dwarf, a gnome, without glands or desire . . . the crippled Vulcan to that Venus, who would not possess her but merely own her by the single strength which power gave, the dead power of money. . . . (H 119)

But the irony does not end with Eula's marriage to Flem. Perhaps the most poignant irony of all is the fact that, goddess of earth and fertility as she seems to be, Eula's dowry is the Old Frenchman's place--a worthless piece of land, "the only thing /Will Varner/ ever bought in /his/ life /he/ couldn't sell to nobody" (H 6). The marriage takes the form of a bargain between Varner and Snopes, and Eula is reduced to an object of trade and profit in the only deal which Flem Snopes ever makes in which cash money is not his immediate object.

V. K. Ratliff, who senses Eula's potency, is shocked by the union. Upon hearing of the business transactions he reacts with regret and even horror, and watches the "shrewd, ruthless old man, the splendid girl with her beautiful mask-like face, the froglike creature which barely reached her shoulder, cashing a check, buying a license, taking a train. . ." (H 149). Ratliff's friendship with Will Varner, the sacrificer, breaks down at this point. With his keen insight he senses a loss, not so much because of the winter, impinging now that the goddess of fertility is gone, as because of the fact that "a little lost village, nameless, without grace, forsaken, yet . . . wombed once by chance and accident one blind seed of the spendthrift Olympian ejaculation and did not even know it. . ." (H 149).

Brooks comments that "the impotent Flem, who is pure single-minded acquisitiveness, and Eula, who is the unself-conscious and almost mindless personification of the fecundity of nature, are almost like goddess and ogre, a positive and a negative power, and the yoking of them together takes on the quality of an allegorical event."[1] In their marriage Flem and Eula combine the full powers of reason and intuition. But because of Flem's rigidity (reflected in his impotency), only a negative can result, as in multiplication of mixed signed numbers. Once he has set up this equation, Faulkner

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[1]Brooks, p. 172.

removes the couple from the novel and concentrates upon a number of love relationships which are thrown into relief upon the backdrop of the Snopes-Varner union.

The most significant of these affairs, which follows immediately upon the departure of Flem and Eula, appears at first far more ludicrous than the marriage of the "Vulcan to that Venus." Faulkner tells his tale of Ike and the cow, however, in the tradition of a medieval romance, and the reader immediately senses the beauty and intensity of a true, totally self-sacrificing love. Ike is as much the antithesis of Snopesism as Eula is. An idiot, and as such stripped of the dangers of reason and logic, he is the only Snopes of his generation for whom abstractions have no value--money and profit simply do not exist for him. Ike's love for Jack Houston's cow transcends even Benjy Compson's love for Caddy, which is ultimately a demanding, selfish, and destructive dependency. According to Brooks, "Faulkner is aware of the grotesque character of the relationship and for this very reason insists upon associating it with the poetry of nature and the poetry of love that is in absolute rapport with nature."[1]

Warren Beck calls Ike's love "perverse,"[2] but it is so only in the most superficial sense. The public union of

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[1]Brooks, p. 180.

[2]Man in Motion, p. 13.

Flem and Eula, which appears at least to be "normal," is actually grotesque; Ike's "sodomic" love for his cow is, in contrast, a fully private natural love which becomes perverse only when it is made public, and in that sense is entirely positive (although there is certainly an element of parody implicit in Faulkner's treatment of Ike's romantic attachment). It is, however, to this love that his most beautiful poetic prose is dedicated:

> He would lie amid the waking instant of earth's teeming minute life, the motionless fronds of water-heavy grasses stooping into the mist before his face in black, fixed curves, along each parabola of which the marching drops held in minute magnification the dawn's rosy miniatures, smelling and even tasting the rich, slow warm barn-reek milk-reek, the flowing immemorial female, hearing the slow planting and the plopping suck of each deliberate cloven mud-spreading hoof, invisible still in the mist loud with its hymeneal cloisters. (H 167-68)

Watson states that Ike "is the embodiment of the primordial natural love that is the basis of fellow-feeling and community."[1] His love for the cow is the only depiction of an ideal love relationship in all of Faulkner's fiction. The cow, primeval symbol of feminine fecundity, is analogous to Eula, who is described in distinctly bovine terms, and Ike responds to his cow as such. He is the only character in the novel who possesses what might be termed a directing intuition. Ike is intuitive in that he responds only to concrete experience: like Benjy Compson his love exists outside of time ("yesterday was not, tomorrow is not, . . . he saw her and this time there was no today even" (H 168). Unlike Benjy,

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[1]Watson, p. 48.

however, his spatial and temporal senses have a practical application. He "knew most of the adjacent countryside and was never disoriented: objects became fluid in darkness but they did not alter in place and juxtaposition" (H 169). Every action that Ike performs with the cow has meaning and purpose: nothing is superfluous. His dramatic rescue of her from the fire, which Walter Brylowski compares to Siegfried's rescue of Brunhilde,[1] is essential to the preservation and consummation of their love. Both Ike's rejection of the coin which Houston gives him in compensation for being separated from the cow, and his "theft" of his beloved indicate that he has no concept of ownership or profit. As Volpe suggests, "the idiot's pursuit of the cow symbolizes the human being's unity with nature."[2] Their love is perverse and grotesque only in the manner of its termination. Flem's marriage to Eula is no less ludicrous than Lump Snopes's turning Ike's love into a profit. The latter is no longer a self-sacrificing, idyllic, Arthurian romance, but "stock-diddling" (H 204) which, ironically, must be stopped in order to preserve the good name of Snopes.

The other two love-relationships which are incorporated into "The Long Summer" section involve Jack Houston and Mink Snopes. These men are essentially rational, and in that

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[1]Faulkner's Olympian Laugh: Myth in the Novels (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1968), p. 145.

[2]Volpe, p. 311.

sense similar to Flem and Labove, but because of the juxtaposition of their stories to Ike's, it is obvious that Faulkner intended the reader to see comparisons as well as contrasts. Watson says that "No matter how grotesque their situations or how self-interested their motives, Ike, Houston, and Mink exhibit the same fundamental passions that Ula . . . inspires in the community. Each, in varying degrees, is a responsive, generous, and dedicated lover possessed of an innate sense of honor."[1] However, the love of Jack Houston for Lucy Pate and the love of Mink for his wife are not the central issues in the tale which irrevocably links them together. They love in a similar manner, and the intense quality of their passion serves to reveal within each a strong conflict between reason and intuition. Houston's passion for Lucy ends tragically because he ultimately refuses to allow emotion to subjugate his concept of his own masculinity. According to Watson, "In Mink, Ike's idyllic love and Houston's masculine pride are distorted into an intense self-assertiveness borne of a lifetime of rage and frustration."[2] The battle between Mink and Houston is ultimately a combat between two extremely masculine and rational minds; thus Mink must relieve himself of his wife and family before the final confrontation.

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[1]Watson, p. 44. [2]Ibid., p. 54.

In view of the thematic juxtaposition under discussion, the significance of the linking of the Ike, Houston, and Mink stories may be regarded in terms of the two most prevalent symbols in Book Three. Faulkner rather intricately juxtaposes the images of cow and horse, which represent (traditionally as well as in Faulkner's work) intuition and rationality, or intellect, respectively. The cow has been discussed above as symbolic of earth, fertility, and the subterranean forces from which intuition springs. The horse, perhaps the most outstanding symbol in the entire novel is, as Watson suggests, "associated with the principle of masculinity."[1] This "principle of masculinity" may, in turn, be seen as analogous to the rational faculty, just as the cow, associated with man's intuitive nature, stands for the principle of femininity. Lucius Priest, in The Reivers, says that the horse is a "creature capable of but one idea at a time, his strongest quality is timidity and fear. He can be tricked and cajoled by a child into breaking his limbs or his heart too in running too far too fast or jumping things too wide or hard or high. . ." (R 92). Like Thomas Sutpen, to whom Miss Rosa repeatedly refers as "man-horse-demon" (A 8), the horse is a "rational" creature in that his "intellect" is rigid and obsessed. Jonathan Swift's Houyhnhnms, whom Gulliver regards as ideal creatures superior to man, are essentially negative in attitude because they are entirely lacking in emotion.

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[1]Ibid., p. 60.

Kenneth Richardson draws further significance from Faulkner's horse-metaphors when he says that "As far back as Sartoris Faulkner had used the horse as a symbol of destruction. . . ."[1] The principle of rationality itself, when divorced from intuition, is an essentially destructive force. Jack Houston is rational in the same sense that Labove is; his inflexibility, his inability to incorporate feeling with intellect, results in his wife's death and, ultimately, in his own. He buys a stallion immediately after his marriage, "as if for a wedding present to her, though he never said so. Or if that blood and bone and muscles represented that polygamous and bitless masculinity which he had relinquished, he never said that" (H 218). The stallion kills Lucy soon after the marriage: Houston, in a blind rage, shoots the horse. He keeps, however, a colt sired by the stallion, and it is this horse who, metamorphosed into a dragon, so threatens Ike as he is saving his cow from the fire. Houston is evidently more attracted by what "stallion" stands for than he is by the actual fact of the horse and its practical value. Mink, on the other hand, relies on nothing but his own devices to assert his masculinity. His is a peculiar cast of mind in which reason is sufficiently tempered by feeling, and especially by a curious sort of faith, so as to be far less destructive than Jack Houston's or Flem Snopes's. However, since the final volume of the trilogy is primarily Mink's

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[1]Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1967), p. 122.

story--Faulkner develops his character far more fully in The Mansion than in The Hamlet--I shall reserve a detailed study of Mink for a later chapter. For the purposes of the present discussion, it will suffice to view him primarily as he serves to tighten the structure of the plot.

Houston's quarrel with Mink, Brooks says, "is not for the food that Mink's animal ate but for the principle of the thing."[1] After Houston impounds his cow, Mink takes revenge, not so much upon the fact of the pound fee which he is forced to pay, as upon Houston's inhumanity. He shoots Houston and then undergoes a series of trials, the greatest of which is his attempt to hide the body from Lump, who wants to rob it. Like Ike, Mink has no interest in money--and it is this element of his character which best designates him as un-Snopes-like. He is not to be further compared with Ike, however: he is entirely lacking in the idiot's natural intuition, as Faulkner vividly points out by having Mink frantically lose his way in the same riverbed which Ike instinctively finds his way through. Mink is eventually captured, and up until the final chapter of the novel he lurks in the background waiting for Flem to rescue him.

In the final section of The Hamlet, the horse is by far the most dominant image. The first part of this section is an adaptation of the short story, "Spotted Horses." Here

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[1]Brooks, p. 183.

the horses, which Flem Snopes brings back from Texas, are anything but rational animals. It is not what they represent to the reader, however, that is important; the significance of their function lies in what they represent to the people of Frenchman's Bend. Florence Leaver finds in this episode "a point where the various levels of mind" which she finds as a central feature of the narrative structure of the novel, are "juxtaposed."[1] The characters react variously, from the single-minded hysteria of Henry Armstid to the cool detachment of Mrs. Littlejohn. Furthermore, although he refuses to admit it, this is Flem's enterprise, and the final outcome of the auction is a demonstration of both his power and his total heartlessness.

The spotted horses themselves provide a strange and colorful image. Watson states that they constitute "an irresistible symbol of masculine pride and honor."[2] Faulkner describes them initially as

> Calico-coated, small-bodied, with delicate legs and pink faces in which their mismatched eyes rolled wild and subdued, they huddled, gaudy motionless and alert, wild as deer, deadly as rattlesnakes, quiet as doves. (H 275)

Without warning, however, the ponies move "like hysterical fish" (H 279) "with purposeless violence" (H 291): they have "wild mismatched eyes" (H 291) and "long evil muzzle/s/"

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[1] "The Structure of The Hamlet," p. 77.

[2] Watson, p. 59.

(H 290). No man in his right mind would want to pay money for such a creature and, indeed, those who do manage to retain their faculties--Flem, Ratliff, Mrs. Littlejohn, and Mrs. Armstid--want no part of the horses. But to the "poor whites" like Henry Armstid the possibility of actually owning a horse is irresistible. Leaver sees "those writhing calico horses" as symbolic of the "elusive things by which human vanity is tempted."[1] Indeed, Faulkner consistently imbues them with a dreamy romantic quality; this reflects, as Brylowski points out, "an irrational desire" which "seizes the men viewing these animals and their wild force."[2] The ponies are irrational and cause the men of Frenchman's Bend to react irrationally to them; but for these men, they symbolize something extremely rational--ownership of one of the ponies will provide them with pride, a sense of honor, and a superficially bolstered ego--a remnant of what their stallions meant for Colonel Sartoris, Thomas Sutpen, and Jack Houston. It is consistent, too, with such an interpretation, that only the child, Wallstreet Panic Snopes, and the woman, Mrs. Armstid--the two involved in the auction who lack the motives of the men--are immune to physical harm from the horses. It is not the animals themselves which cause Mrs. Armstid's tragedy, but her husband's maniacal desire to possess one of them.

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[1]Leaver, p. 81.

[2]Brylowski, pp. 148-49.

She and Wall react intuitively, while the men react irrationally out of a desire or need to prove themselves possessed of reason--to get a "good" bargain when they see one.

The "Spotted Horses" episode concludes with two trials, both of which ultimately prove Flem Snopes's superiority. This is his final act in exploiting the people of Frenchman's Bend. Before his triumph is complete, however, he must accomplish two things more: rid himself of Mink, and out-maneuver Ratliff. Mink is convinced that his blood-tie with Flem will save him from a murder conviction. Flem, however, knows that Mink is the only Snopes who represents a threat to his ambitions. He is the only member of the tribe strong enough to challenge Flem; his lack of interest in monetary profit makes him doubly dangerous, so he must be disposed of. As we discover in The Mansion, allowing Mink to be sent to the state penitentiary is Flem's fatal error; but the ultimate result of that mistake is not apparent for forty years.

During Flem's nine-month absence from Frenchman's Bend, Ratliff becomes increasingly adamant both in his adverse reactions to Snopesism and in his campaign against them. I. O.'s meaningless verbiage irritates him to the point where he breakes out into a bitter denunciation:

> "Snopes can come and Snopes can go, but Will Varner looks like he is fixing to Snopes forever. Or Varner will Snopes forever--take your pick. What is it the fellow says? off with the old and on with the new: the old job at the old stand, maybe a new fellow doing the jobbing but it's the same old stern getting reamed out?" Bookwright was looking at him.

> "If you would stand closer to the door, he could hear you a heap better," he said.
> "Sholy," Ratliff said. "Big ears have little pitchers, the world beats a track to the rich man's hog-pen but it ain't every family has a new lawyer, not to mention a prophet. Waste not, want not, except that a full waist dont need no prophet to prophecy a profit and just whose." Now they were all watching him--the smooth, impenetrable face with something about the eyes and the lines beside the mouth which they could not read. (H 164)

Ratliff's bitter parody of I. O. is an indictment of Will Varner as well; it at once establishes Ratliff's intellect and wit as far superior to that of any of his acquaintances, and sets him off from the rest of the inhabitants as the only member of the community competent to defend it. Shortly after this episode, he takes decisive action against Snopesism. Faulkner stated that "the impulse to eradicate Snopes is in my opinion so strong that it selects its champions when the crisis comes" (FU 34). Ratliff's first opportunity presents itself in the exploitation of Ike's love for his cow by Lump, who charges the other men a fee to watch Ike's love-making. Richardson asserts that "Throughout the novel, Ratliff is the emblem of the humane, ethical tradition," and that here, in contrast to Lump's profiteering, he "acts out of his humanity."[1] Ratliff takes the cow away from Ike not because he wants to, but because he has to eradicate at least this much Snopes amorality while he can. The others, even Tull and Bookwright, are heartless enough to enjoy Ike's shame and foolish enough to allow Lump to take advantage of their lack of humanity.

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[1]Richardson, p. 122.

Ratliff, however, is rebuked by Mrs. Littlejohn, and his explanation to her reveals a deep conflict which he unflaggingly works to resolve within himself, and which in this case he can only resolve through action:

> "I aint never disputed I'm a pharisee. . . . You dont need to tell me he aint got nothing else. I know that. Or that I can sholy leave him have at least this much. I know that too. Or that besides, it aint any of my business. I know that too, just as I know that the reason I aint going to leave him have what he does have is simply because I am strong enough to keep him from it. I am stronger than him. Not righter. Not any better, maybe. But just stronger. (H 201)

Aside from the fact that he is in a position to separate Ike from the cow, "Ratliff's strength lies in his capacity to see beyond the immediate fact of Ike's exploitation and to subordinate his compassion for Ike to his commitment to preserve morality."[1] However, through this action Ratliff is able to preserve only a small remnant of morality, as the removal of Ike's cow occasions I. O.'s exploitation of his cousin Eck, whom he cons into paying for most of the cow. Ratliff is astounded by what even a Snopes will do to another Snopes, particularly when he discovers that Eck has brought Ike a toy wooden cow because he "felt sorry for him" (H 272).

Ratliff's exasperation over the lack of support from the community and the inability of Frenchman's Bend to even see that there is a need to thwart Snopesism, is released in a passionate outburst of frustration caused particularly by

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[1]Watson, p. 51.

his helplessness in the spotted horses trials, as well as by his knowledge that Flem will let Mink go to Parchman:

> "I wasn't protecting a Snopes from Snopeses; I wasn't even protecting a people from a Snopes. I was protecting something that wasn't even a people, that wasn't nothing but something that don't want nothing but to walk and feel the sun and wouldn't know how to hurt no man even if it would and wouldn't want to even if it could. . . . I never made them Snopeses and I never made the folks that cant wait to bare their backsides to them. I could do more, but I wont, I wont, I tell you!" (H 326)

Ratliff's momentary disgust at the gullibility of the people of Frenchman's Bend, as well as his sense of frustration, causes him to let his guard down. For a short time he loses his ability to be "impenetrable" and with this loses his shrewdness, and thus exposes himself to Flem's rapacity, vulnerable for the first time.

The final chapter of the novel is devoted to Ratliff's "downfall," as he allows himself, along with Bookwright and Armstid, to be duped into buying the Old Frenchman's place from Flem. The old salted gold mine trick works, and it is only after several nights of fruitless digging after they find the "salt" that Ratliff's mind "clicked" (H 365). But once he realizes that Flem has lured him into playing the Snopes game and beaten him at it, Ratliff accepts his defeat. Once again "his invisible face" is "quizzical, bemused, impenetrable" (H 366). The incident ends tragically, however, in the sense that Henry Armstid goes mad frantically digging for something of value on a piece of property that is worthless even as farmland.

The complex network of ironies merges finally into one enormous irony at the close of the novel. The Old Frenchman's place, so rich in tradition though now valueless in itself, is turned by Flem into his greatest profit. By buying the place from Snopes, Ratliff rids Frenchman's Bend of him; but, because he bartered his share in a Jefferson restaurant for his share in the sterile plantation, it is Ratliff himself who provides Flem with a foothold in Jefferson. His "Come up" (H 373) which closes the novel, foreshadows the potential achievement of far greater ambition than Frenchman's Bend could supply or hold.

CHAPTER III

"BECAUSE HE MISSED IT. HE MISSED IT COMPLETELY"[1]

Although Faulkner intended the Snopes novels to be viewed as a trilogy, seventeen years divide the publication of the first two volumes, and certain essential differences in those two novels must be attributed to this temporal lapse. A number of Faulkner critics consider that The Town and The Mansion are vastly inferior works, and accuse Faulkner of having wasted or drained the creative energy which enabled him to produce The Sound and the Fury; Absalom, Absalom!; and The Hamlet. This view is perhaps best summarized by Irving Howe, who maintains that "Faulkner did not succeed--at least until 1960--in writing a fully sustained first-rate novel. The books he published in the years after the war contain many fine and even brilliant parts, but on the whole they are forced, anxious, and high-pitched, the work of a man, no longer driven, who must now drive himself."[2] Of the works to which Howe refers, Go Down, Moses (1942); Intruder in the Dust (1948); Knight's Gambit (1949); Requiem for a Nun (1951); and A Fable (1954)[3]

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[1]H, pp. 153, 177.

[2]William Faulkner: A Critical Study, second ed., rev. and expanded (New York: Vintage, 1960), p. 283.

[3]I would agree that Requiem for a Nun and Knight's Gambit are works of inferior quality; it is difficult, however,

are those published between The Hamlet in 1940 and The Town in 1957.

Volpe postulates that after the publication of Go Down, Moses, which "marks the end of Faulkner's great period of creativity, . . . his novels tended to be inspired by idea more than feeling."[1] Although I tend to agree with Volpe's latter statement, I cannot see that emphasis upon idea rather than upon feeling necessarily demonstrates a lessening of greatness in Faulkner's creative powers, unless the "greatness" of Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury lies in the emotional intensity which they carry rather than in the thematic ideas which they embody. If these novels are "greater" than the later novels, they are so because of a tightness and unity in structure rather than a subjective passion on the part of the author which is expressed through them.

The one Faulkner novel which has received the most adverse criticism of this sort is A Fable. Most critics

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to judge them according to the same standards that one may judge the other works by, particularly as they differ in structure. The former is Faulkner's only attempt at writing drama--unsuccessful in that it is interspersed with long narrative sections and does not possess a true, "playable," dramatic quality; the latter is a series of short stories, loosely connected in that they are of the "detective story" genre, and thus cannot truly be considered as a novel. Some of the stories, however, are among Faulkner's best--particularly "Hand Upon the Waters" and "Tomorrow."

[1] A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner, p. 252.

appear to agree with Volpe that "Faulkner's penchant, during this stage of his career, for abstract statements about man and life produces, in A Fable, too many exasperatingly obtuse passages and too many dull abstract speeches that induce more irritation than thought."[1] This is a novel which Faulkner anguished over for nine years[2]--far longer than he spent writing any of his other novels. It is certainly one of his densest and most complex works, a fact which probably accounts for its dubious reception. As Richard P. Adams states, "At present there is so little agreement about it among critics that they are not even able to disagree very cogently, much less arrive at any confident conclusions about its moral or artistic value."[3]

A Fable is indeed an "intellectual" novel, more so than any of Faulkner's other works, partially because he employs allegory as a controlling technique--a literary mode which, as it suggests contrivance and a didactic point of view, has been in disfavor among literary circles for the past three hundred years. Oddly enough, a number of modern and contemporary novelists such as Franz Kafka, J. R. R.

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[1]Ibid., p. 304.

[2]V. S. Pritchett, "Time Frozen: A Fable," Partisan Review, 21 (Sept-Oct 1954); rpt. in William Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Penn Warren, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 238.

[3]Faulkner: Myth and Motion (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 161.

Tolkien, Romain Gary, Gunter Grass, Robert Coover, and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. have returned to allegory as a means of dealing with the disillusionment which has resulted from the two great wars.[1] Grass's The Tin Drum,[2] for example, is a brilliant inverted allegory in which the author parodies, on various levels, man's "allegorical behavior"--his destructive propensity for devoting himself totally to a single essentially abstract ideology. World War II, with its threat of total annihilation, certainly posed a threat to Faulkner's belief that man will ultimately prevail. A Fable provided him with a vehicle for qualifying, redefining, and reasserting his faith in man's ability to endure and prevail. For a Faulkner admirer, however, reading A Fable is a jolting experience, mostly because it is his only work in which idea consistently and overtly controls story and image.[3] The ideas which

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[1]Allegory has, however, undergone a rather radical transformation in the twentieth century. Traditional allegory is a distinctive and highly conventionalized literary mode. Modern allegory is far less obviously a convention; it has become, instead, one means--integrated with other modes and techniques--through which various artists focus upon the complexities of modern man's predicament in the face of total annihilation.

[2]Gunter Grass, The Tin Drum, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Vintage, 1959).

[3]Control of image by theme or idea is set forth as the primary characteristic of allegorical writing by Graham Hough, A Preface to The Faerie Queene (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963) and Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1964).

Faulkner expresses in A Fable are, however, essentially the same ideas with which he deals in his earlier and his later novels. It is only in the mode of expression that this novel differs perceptibly from his others.

A Fable is didactic; it is a novel which one is forced to think about rather than experience or feel. Faulkner has arranged it so that one must become aware of the ideas behind the novel, if one reads it with any perception, unclouded by empathy with the characters who are, essentially and purposefully, lifeless in comparison with the inhabitants of Yoknapatawpha County. The entire action of the novel hinges upon a Christ-like corporal of obscure peasant stock, who engineers a mutiny among his regiment which halts World War I, and which threatens to end it altogether in a peace unrehearsed and uncontrolled by Allied and enemy commanders. The novel concerns the trial of the corporal and his twelve followers, and the execution and burial of the corporal himself. According to Heinrich Straumann, however, this series of events (which parallel the events of the Passion Week) is overshadowed throughout the novel by "the discussion among those who have to decide the fate of the mutineers. In these discussions is located the philosophical center of the work. . . ."[1] Through both of these discussions which precede the

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[1] "An American Interpretation of Existence: Faulkner's A Fable," Anglia (1955); trans. Grace A. Goodman and Olga W. Vickery, and rpt. in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960), p. 351.

execution of the corporal, and the effects which his sacrifice have upon those who are left, Faulkner explores and comments upon two strata: the military hierarchy, and a hierarchy of minds analogous to that found in The Hamlet.

The three major characters--the old general, the corporal, and a British battalion runner--constitute a sort of dialectic of minds through which Faulkner reveals both the nature of man's struggle and the means by which he may "prevail." The old general (Allied Commander) and the corporal represent thesis and antithesis in all respects save refusal to compromise. In a scene which parallels Satan's temptation of Christ in the wilderness, the old general says to the corporal (who is his son):

> we are two articulations, self-elected possibly, anyway elected, anyway postulated, not so much to defend as to test two inimical conditions which, through no fault of ours but through the simple paucity and restrictions of the arena where they meet, must contend and--one of them --perish: I, champion of this mundane earth which, whether I like it or not, is, and to which I did not ask to come, yet since I am here, not only must stop but intend to stop during my allotted while: you, champion of an esoteric realm of man's baseless hopes and his infinite capacity--no: passion--for unfact. (F 308)

The conflict posed here is between the supreme rationalist, "who no longer believed in anything but his disillusion and his intelligence and his limitless power" (F 33), and the supreme idealist who, like Christ, is a "furious and intractable dreamer" (F 320). Each represents an extreme which can exist only in isolation. The old general is

alienated from man in his role as manipulator; the corporal is also alienated in his martyrdom to an ideal--he alone among the mutineers is actually executed. And he ultimately becomes, as the Unknown Soldier, an abstraction--the embodiment of an idea, a concept. However much the action of the novel may center around the corporal, he is not the main protagonist, if such a figure must, by definition, undergo some inner transformation as a result of experience. It is, instead, the British runner who must be viewed, at the close of the novel, as the protagonist: it is he who, in reaction to the events which surround him, believes, in Faulkner's words, that "This is terrible, I'm going to do something about it."[1] As Nicholas M. Rinaldi points out, an important thematic element in A Fable consists in Faulkner's interpretation of war as a game. It is not, however, a contest between opposing armies, but one "in which the generals of both sides are lined up in unison against the common soldiers of both sides,"[2] and the cast of mind of each of the major characters may be viewed according to how he plays the game. The old general knows all the rules of war as they are set up according to tradition, and he understands that the rules must be followed

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[1]Jean Stein, "William Faulkner: An Interview," Paris Review (Spring 1956); rpt. in Three Decades of Criticism, p. 75.

[2]"Game Imagery and Game-Consciousness in Faulkner's Fiction," Modern Fiction Studies (Oct. 1964), p. 115.

exactly; he invents certain plays and, along with the enemy commander, wields the power and manipulates the pawns. The corporal plays the game, but he makes his own rules; he leads the pawns but refuses to manipulate them. The battalion runner, at one time a lieutenant with the British Army, resigns his commission because he "'must get back to the muck with /man/. Then maybe I'll be free'" (F 72). He refuses to play the game at all; he remains in the war, but neither manipulates nor allows himself to be manipulated; he becomes the corporal's most ardent "disciple" in his effort to understand man and man's compulsion to play such games. Straumann views the runner as one "who struggles until he is mutilated and is willing to endure all suffering." In his final interview with Marya, the corporal's half-sister,

> he encounters for the first time absolute understanding, an intuition into the relationship of things, . . . and with it he can raise himself above the misery of the world. He sees the irony of the way the world is ordered, and gains the power and the right to laugh. Only after this does he receive the medal, the badge of honor of one who had to die for his faith in the brotherhood of men. And now he will continue on his lonely way as stranger and as one who understands.[1]

Because he learns finally to understand, the runner represents a synthesis in the dialectic--he alone survives, while the old general and the corporal do not, although the best of both survives through him.

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[1]Straumann, p. 366.

According to Straumann's view, the controlling idea behind A Fable is that "our existence cannot be interpreted from a single point of view but only as a duality,"[1] that "from one and the same source come preservation and annihilation."[2] Those who "cannot endure the irony of the dualistic scale of values"[3] embodied in the figures of the old general and the corporal ultimately destroy themselves. In order to prevail, man must be able to endure. "Endurance is terribly hard, but it is the solution of sensitive men in the incessant strife between the opposing forces."[4] Because the British runner is able to endure, he learns understanding, and it is through such understanding of the ironies implicit in man that he and others like him will prevail.

Faulkner deals with essentially the same duality in The Hamlet, where the conflict is embodied in the rational Flem Snopes and the intuitive Eula Varner. A Fable is an attempt, on Faulkner's part, to work out the same idea on a more universal scale through old but more explicitly revealed motifs such as war, game-imagery, and the Christian myth. It is almost as though he was attempting, through his use of allegory in A Fable, to express his philosophy of man in his struggle in terms which would force his readers to intelligently interpret and recognize the theme which is actually a

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[1]Ibid., p. 360.

[2]Ibid., p. 363.

[3]Ibid., p. 371.

[4]Ibid.

controlling idea throughout his fiction. Up until the publication of A Fable, at least, no Faulkner critic had discussed his work in terms of the ways in which his characters experience their universal dilemma. It is particularly interesting to note that, even to date, only Europeans seem to grasp the significance of A Fable. In contrast to the severely adverse criticism among American reviewers, Heinrich Straumann's article is the only study of that novel with which I am familiar in which A Fable is analyzed with perceptive and insightful appreciation.[1] Straumann, incidentally, regards the novel as a masterpiece--"a milestone in the history of American literature."[2]

Perhaps only a European could value A Fable as highly as it should be valued because, as Barrett states, "in America a philosophical idea is an alien and embarrassing thing. In their actual life Americans are not only a non-intellectual but an anti-intellectual people."[3] At any rate, it is the philosophical, ideological aspect of the novel to which American critics so strongly object. And it is in this sense, as

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[1]Since the publication of The Sound and the Fury in 1929, Faulkner has been more appreciated in Europe, particularly in France, than he has been in the United States. The Benjy section of The Sound and the Fury has, in fact, been said to have influenced European literature more than any work published since Freud's Interpretation of Dreams in 1903. Such a statement was made by Professor Maurice LaBelle in his course in Comparative Literature at Drake University, Autumn 1970.

[2]Straumann, p. 372.

[3]Irrational Man, p. 269.

well as in its explicit expression of the highly complex source of man's struggle with existence that A Fable should be regarded as a work which must be studied if one is to obtain a perceptive interpretation of the rest of Faulkner's fiction.

After finishing A Fable, Faulkner returned to Yoknapatawpha to deal with essentially the same ideology which had prompted his allegory, through a medium with which he and his readers were more familiar. In A Fable he uses Christian myth as a motif for expression of man's basic conflict; in The Town and The Mansion Faulkner returns to the myth which he himself created with the Snopeses.

The highly philosophical Fable, when placed in its chronological relation to the Snopes novels, may be termed a transitional work, in that the mechanics which Faulkner employed therein point to certain fairly distinct differences between The Hamlet and The Town. In the first place, the second volume of the trilogy is more sophisticated than the first in both tone and setting. Whereas the low, ribald comedy of The Hamlet is consistently infused with tragic implications, The Town is a soberer and more structurally conventional novel in that its humor is wry and intellectual, and that it builds toward a single tragic event. The comedy of the earlier novel is situational: in the later novel the humor arises (with the exception of the "Mule in the Yard" episode) from verbal banter, a sort of contest of wits,

between the two chief protagonists. The most striking difference, however, between the two novels lies in characterization, particularly in regard to Flem and Eula Snopes. Whereas in The Hamlet they are represented as archetypal expressions of the extremes of man's nature--the one as cold logic, the other as pure intuition--in The Town they exist as real people. Their natures are more complex and less obviously at war with one another, although they do retain the essential characteristics with which Faulkner endows them in The Hamlet. This basic distinction between the two works is perhaps best stated by Volpe when he says that "Faulkner's interest in the complexity of the human character had evidently become so intense by the time he returned to his trilogy that he was far less interested in the distinction between good and bad than in the mixture of the two."[1]

As in The Hamlet, the basic plot of The Town centers around the movement of Flem Snopes, from half-owner of Ratliff's Jefferson restaurant to president of the Sartoris Bank. In this novel, however, Flem's movement serves as background, whereas in the earlier volume most of the action actually hinged on each step of his calculated aggression. In both novels the other characters are revealed as they are juxtaposed to Flem, but in The Town their reactions are of a

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[1]Volpe, p. 317.

more philosophical, speculative nature. Jefferson is far less affected externally by Flem's rise than was Frenchman's Bend. Faulkner achieves this more internal effect partially through point of view, because The Town is narrated by three characters rather than by the author himself. The largest factor, however, which figures in setting the tonal emphasis of this novel is the emergence of Gavin Stevens as the chief protagonist. Although he narrates only little more than a third of The Town, Gavin's point of view predominates. The actual events centering around Flem Snopes are de-emphasized by Faulkner in favor of Gavin's reactions to them. Even those chapters narrated by his nephew Charles Mallison (which constitute more than half of the work), are colored by Gavin, since the child and adolescent Charles is influenced by his uncle. Ratliff, who narrates only about thirty pages, serves as an intellectual foil for Gavin. The thematic direction of The Town evolves through the internal view which Faulkner thus gives us of the workings of Gavin Stevens's mind.

Although Gavin does not appear in The Hamlet, he was already a member of the Yoknapatawpha retinue before that novel was published. Since he is such a central figure in the last two Snopes novels, some discussion of the earlier works in which his character evolves might be meaningful at this point. Faulkner's concept of Gavin probably stems from an extremely early lawyer-figure--the entirely inept Horace Benbow of Sartoris and Sanctuary. After his disastrous defence of Lee Goodwin, Benbow fades from the Yoknapatawpha cycle, his

role as Jefferson's "designated paladin of justice and truth and right" (G 382) taken over by Gavin Stevens in Light in August. He appears only briefly in that novel, the "District Attorney, a Harvard graduate, a Phi Beta Kappa" (L 419), to offer what would at first glance seem to be a perceptive explanation of Joe Christmas's final actions. Gavin's theory, that it was "that stain either on his white blood or his black blood, whichever you will, . . . which killed him" (L 424) is, however, fallacious. As Olga Vickery states, he "is not able to see Joe Christmas except through a filter of preconceptions. . . . Despite his disinterested rationalism and objectivity, he assigns definite though arbitrary moral values to black and white blood, claiming that it was the former which made Joe strike Hightower and the latter which enabled him to die heroically."[1] Stevens, heir to the ironbound tradition sacred to a good Mississippi family, is a theorizer, ostensibly objective as he is uninvolved, who founds his theories upon abstractions. His judgment regarding Christmas is obtuse and rigid: he entirely fails to see that it was not one of two incompatible extremes, but the conflict and confusion resulting from Christmas's abstract concept of himself, finally realized and resolved, which causes him to seek out Hightower and then to allow himself to be shot. Richardson says that Horace Benbow "is a man unable to cope with evil--a man who does not have the moral power to withstand the sordidness and injustice

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[1]The Novels of William Faulkner, p. 73.

of immorality."[1] He indicates that Stevens represents a contrast to Benbow in that he "is a man unsurprised by and also unafraid of the ugliness and amorality and immorality"[2] which exists around him. Richardson has, however, misinterpreted Gavin's character; no matter how objective and realistic he may seem in Light in August (or elsewhere), he is only "unsurprised by" and "unafraid of" evil and amorality because his mind works on such an abstract level that he experiences illusions rather than concrete events.

In the story "Go Down, Moses," Faulkner gives us more insight into Gavin's character. He is introduced as a man with

> a thin, intelligent, unstable face, a rumpled linen suit from whose lapel a Phi Beta Kappa key dangled on a watch chain--Gavin Stevens, Phi Beta Kappa, Harvard, Ph.D., Heidelberg, whose office was his hobby, although it made his living for him, and whose serious vocation was a twenty-two-year-old unfinished translation of the Old Testament back into classic Greek. (G 370-71)

Richardson seems to admire in Gavin a "disinterested scholarship"[3] which this latter activity would appear to represent. For Gavin it evidently represents something similar--the epitome of intellectual endeavor: I find it difficult, however, to think of a scholarly project more impractical, futile, or absurd. Translating the Old Testament back into a language in which it was not even originally written is actually the antithesis of true scholarship, which should have unique

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[1] Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner, p. 132.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 134.

discovery or insight as its primary goal. Gavin's mental processes are typified by this "vocation"; throughout the other works in which he figures, with the possible exception of some of the stories in Knight's Gambit, he demonstrates an infuriating propensity for thinking in circles.[1]

In Intruder in the Dust (1948), Gavin first appears as a major character, and Faulkner gives us a clearer picture of his make-up. In that novel he stands as a naive, obtuse, and prejudiced (if kindly) lawyer, surrounded by characters whose modes of thinking are in direct contrast to his. Charles Mallison, Aleck Sander, Miss Habersham, and Lucas Beauchamp all possess an intuitive quality which Gavin entirely lacks. Lucas knows that he will not hang as instinctively as Chick, Aleck Sander, and Miss Habersham know that he could not be guilty of Vinson Gowry's murder. Their intuitions are correct because each possesses an insight into human nature which Gavin does not have. In an ironically un-lawyer-like manner, he immediately assumes that Lucas is guilty--a judgment based on ingrained Southern prejudices against the Negro. His misconception here is similar to that which he made regarding Joe Christmas, as he thinks, in reference to Lucas, that

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[1]For all his "disinterested" theorizing about Joe Christmas's final movements in Light in August, Gavin himself is ironically analogous to the man whom he judges. Throughout that novel, Christmas moves futilely in circles. In his final act, he at last is able to break out of this circle and move in a straight, self-determined direction. The theory which Gavin derives concerning this movement is as absurd, rigid, and confining as is Christmas's general pattern of movement.

"Only a nigger could kill a man, let alone shoot him in the back, and then sleep like a baby as soon as he found something flat enough to lie down on. . . (I 58). It takes the natural insight of two children and an old woman, who are so convinced by their intuitions regarding Lucas that they have the courage to act according to what they feel and know about him, to break through Gavin's prejudice and prove to him that he has made a gross misjudgment.

Knight's Gambit (1949), a collection of "detective" tales, is the only work in which Faulkner depicts Gavin as possessing a truly shrewd, perceptive intelligence, although even here he is primarily the uninvolved, objective theorizer. In reply to a question regarding this apparent discrepancy in his characterization of the lawyer, Faulkner explains that, in The Town and Intruder, besides being older than in the Knight's Gambit stories, Gavin

> had got out of his depth. He had got into the real world. While he was--could be--a county attorney, an amateur Sherlock Holmes, then he was at home, but he got out of that. He got into a real world in which people anguished and suffered, not simply did things which they shouldn't do. And he wasn't as prepared to cope with people who were following their own bent, not for profit but simply because they had to. . . . When he had to deal with people, he was an amateur. . . . (FU 140)

However, as Faulkner exhibits in Knight's Gambit, particularly in such stories as "Hand Upon the Waters," "Monk," and "Tomorrow," Gavin is not entirely obtuse.

The Gavin Stevens who assumes the role of confessor and conscience for Temple Drake in Requiem for a Nun is more

like the character we encounter in The Town. In this novel, which may be termed a rather rambling and loosely-structured treatise on the role and obligations of law and order, Gavin is no longer the detached theorizer; he has become, instead, a sensitive, rather naive man who becomes at least a semi-participant in the human dramas in which he is interested. In Requiem for a Nun, in which Gavin functions as both moral and legal advisor, Faulkner deals again with the conflict with which he is concerned in The Hamlet and Go Down, Moses, and redefines it in terms of the series of oppositions which he explores in A Fable, The Town, and The Mansion. The basic conflict is still between the wilderness and man's ambitious exploitation of the natural order, but here the cause of the conflict is man in his most abstract and pretentious role as law-maker. Faulkner employs the Dome of the State Capitol in Jackson as a symbol of abstract laws, created by men to facilitate and rationalize their desire to manipulate, and describes it as being built at a time when

> men's mouths were full of law and order, all men's mouths were round with the sound of money; one unanimous golden affirmation ululated the nation's boundless immeasureable forenoon: profit plus regimen equals security: a nation of common wealths; that crumb, that dome, that gilded pustule, that Idea risen now, suspended like a balloon or a portent or a thundercloud above what used to be wilderness. . . . (RN 236)

As Faulkner illustrates in The Hamlet, legality has come to have little to do with natural law, with the ancient and intuitive bonds of brotherhood between men, and of man's

responsibility for the land. In Requiem, the law is proven to have minimal relevance for those natural rights and obligations from which it evolved and which it was originally intended to protect. Here, as exposed through contrast between Temple Drake Stevens and Nancy Mannigoe, it is proven to be no more than a huge pile of meaningless words, abstract and cold, having no bearing upon human relations.

The conflict between natural response and rational manipulation, which has been shown to be a central one in the Faulkner canon, is incorporated into Gavin's very character. At the opening of Requiem, Faulkner tells us that

> He looks more like a poet than a lawyer and actually is: . . . a sort of bucolic Cincinnatus, champion not so much of truth as of justice, or of justice as he sees it, constantly involving himself . . . in affairs of equity and passion and even crime too among his people . . . sometimes directly contrary to his office of County Attorney. . . . (RN 205)

The inner conflict which tortures and confuses Gavin throughout the last two Snopes novels can be expressed in various ways: he is poet and lawyer, romantic and rationalist, participator and observer. Essentially, it is a conflict between natural law and jurisprudence, or, in more specific terms, between what Gavin feels and what he thinks he understands.

This is essentially the same Gavin Stevens who emerges in The Town as both chief protagonist and as Jefferson's chief defender from Snopesism. Vickery comments that here Gavin serves as "defender of the old established order by virtue of his family background and champion of civic

morality by virtue of his office."[1] In regarding the Snopes trilogy from a socio-economic rather than from an individualistic point of view, however, I think that Vickery misses the significance of Gavin's role in the last two volumes. Certainly he is interested in saving Jefferson from the corrupting Snopes influence, but he is far more often engaged in defending his own illusions and conceptions from the reality of events. Vickery comes closer to the truth about Gavin when she mentions the "dual role" reflected in his character which "combines elements of the poet and the lawyer, the romantic and the conventional moralist, the rebel and the conformist. Inevitably the one conflicts with the other, complicating motives and thwarting action."[2]

Gavin is obviously a character in whom Faulkner was intensely interested toward the end of his career. The lawyer's characterization in the earlier works discussed above is retained in the last two Snopes books; in those novels Faulkner develops him into an extremely complex character. He becomes, in The Town, a unique and penetrating figure partially because of his educational background, but more significantly because of the sort of mind he possesses. Gavin is certainly a fumbling idealist, but he does have a keen intellect, a deep sensitivity, a fine sense of humor, and, perhaps most importantly, the ability to eventually

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[1]Vickery, p. 183. [2]Ibid.

understand his errors in judgment and to laugh at his own obtuseness. Gavin is not, as Warren Beck suggests, "Faulkner's alter ego"[1]--there is no evidence of autobiographical intent in his characterization. He does, however, set the tone of The Town, primarily through his own narrative sections; through those of his nephew Charles Mallison, whom he influences rather strongly; and thirdly through those of Ratliff, who could be said to serve as Gavin's alter ego.

When Flem Snopes moves to Jefferson, Ratliff moves with him. It is he who introduces Gavin to the dangers of Snopesism. However, whereas it was Ratliff who served as chief protagonist in The Hamlet, it is Gavin who, in The Town and The Mansion, must come to grips with Snopesism. In the first of the two novels, at least, Gavin is the character with whom Faulkner is most concerned, and Ratliff's role is subjugated to that of experienced observer and objective commentator on the lawyer's activities and theories. Unlike The Hamlet, both the plot and structure of The Town are fairly simple. Flem takes over Ratliff's restaurant, becomes superintendent of the Jefferson power plant, is made vice-president of the Sartoris Bank, and finally usurps the

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[1]Man in Motion, p. 70. It is plausible, however, that Gavin might represent an element of Faulkner's own character which the artist understood and objectified in his Heidelberg lawyer.

presidency of that bank from Manfred de Spain. His motives and methods are similar to what they were in Frenchman's Bend, although he adjusts himself to a more subtle and devious pace in order to worm his way into the Jefferson social structure. Whereas in The Hamlet, however, Faulkner set a good many characters in contrast to Flem, in The Town he is actually opposed only by Gavin, Ratliff, and Chick. In limiting his number of Snopes-fighters, Faulkner is able to draw a far more detailed and complex picture of the nature of Flem himself, as well as of those who are pitted against him.

In order to view the trilogy in perspective, it is necessary to indulge in a more detailed discussion of Gavin as Faulkner presents him in The Town, particularly as he does represent a new type of mind, an understanding of which is crucial to comprehension of the significance of the rational/intuitive theme in the trilogy. Gavin is the only idealist in the Snopes saga and, as such, he is pitted against the amoral realism of Flem Snopes as well as against the moral realism of Ratliff. As James F. Farnham suggests, what Gavin must learn is to approach and react to events realistically,[1] which he eventually is able to do at the end of The Mansion. Volpe says that "Gavin's idealism is unquestionably his dominant character trait; it makes him the admirable man he

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[1]See "Faulkner's Unsung Hero: Gavin Stevens," Arizona Quarterly, 21 (Spring 1965), 1, pp. 115-132.

is, but it also retards his recognition that absolutes are not applicable to human beings."[1] He not only takes on the role (which as public defender is rightfully his) of saving Jefferson from Snopesism, he assumes the task of saving the Snopes women from Flem. Gavin becomes so personally enmeshed in this latter role that he loses the perspective necessary to adequately fulfill the obligations of the former, public role.

When the Snopeses move into Jefferson, Gavin is in his early twenties,[2] an age at which he is ripe to succumb to Eula's charms. As I have indicated above, neither she nor Flem retains the archetypal proportions with which Faulkner endowed them in The Hamlet. In The Town they are no paler, but their natures are less simplistic and far more human. Eula retains both her power and her intuitive character; furthermore, in The Town, she possesses a shrewd natural insight. Chick describes her as being

> too big, heroic, what they call Junoesque. It was that there was just too much of what she was for any one female package to contain, and hold: too much of white, too much of female, too much of maybe just glory, I dont know: so that at first sight of her you felt a kind of shock of gratitude just for being alive and being male at the same instant with her in space and time, and then in the next second and forever after a kind of despair because you knew that there never would be enough of any one male to match and hold and deserve her. . . . (T 6)

Gavin, steeped as he is in Southern tradition and classical literature, responds to Eula--the goddess married to a

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[1]Volpe, p. 326.

[2]See Volpe's chronology, p. 402.

monster--as a Spenserian knight responds to a lady in distress. Brooks draws a detailed analogy between Gavin's aspirations, feelings, and actions and the tradition of the medieval romantic hero, particularly as expressed in the Tristan legend. This sort of love "does not look forward to the possession of the loved one, but is a transcendent love--love for a lady who is an ideal or a dream vision rather than a woman of flesh and blood."[1] Gavin is the self-elected champion of an ideal woman whom he creates from what he sees in Eula. His concept of honor is almost absurd in the manner of its application, particularly in the sophomoric games which he plays with her lover, Manfred de Spain. At the Christmas Cotillion, when de Spain dances with Eula in "splendid unshame," Gavin immediately assumes the role of "the protector in the formal ritual" (T 75), challenges de Spain, and gets a smashed face for his efforts. According to Chick, who learns of the incident from his cousin Gowan, "What he was doing was simply defending forever with his blood the principle that chastity and virtue in women shall be defended whether they exist or not" (T 76). In this sense Gavin is similar to Quentin Compson in his mania to defend Caddy's virtue. The absurdity of such an attitude as Gavin's--defending something which he knows does not exist--is summed up neatly by the cynical Mr. Compson, when he tells Quentin that "Women are never virgins.

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[1] The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 197.

Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature. It's nature is hurting you not Caddy. . . " (SF 143). In his discussion of The Hamlet, Brooks perceptively points out that in their own ways, Ike, Mink, Houston, Labove, and Ratliff are all men of honor. It is only in the actions of Ike, Mink, and Ratliff, though, that honor has any value, as for them it is an intuitive solution to a practical problem. Throughout Faulkner's fiction honor is an important concept; the ways in which his characters are "honorable" is reflected in the degree and in the quality of their mental awareness. For Shakespeare's Falstaff, one of Faulkner's favorite characters,[1] honor has no value whatever because it is not grounded in actual experience. For Falstaff, honor is only "A word," "Air," "a mere scutcheon,"[2] as is virginity to Quentin's father ("I said That's just words and he said So is virginity. . .,"(SF 143). The concept of honorable defense of such abstractions as virtue and chastity appeals to Gavin because he lives in a world of illusion, particularly where Eula is concerned. As Farnham says, he "constantly views human situations abstractly and romantically."[3]

Unlike Sutpen, Quentin, and the Frenchman, however, Gavin does not invent abstractions, nor is he obsessed with rigid codes and grand designs. He is drawn to abstractions because he is an idealist, a romantic who has not yet had

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[1]Stein, p. 79. [2]Henry IV, Part I, V, i, 133-39.

[3]Farnham, p. 125.

experience enough to know how to cope with the realities of everyday life. Thus he is outraged and shocked when Eula offers herself to him--not because she tempts him to break an ethical code, but because the mundane, realistic nature of the situation threatens to shatter his illusion of her--the ideal that he himself has created, and which has nothing to do with the actual flesh-and-blood woman.

Gavin's primary role, however, is defending Jefferson from Snopes's rapacity and acquisitiveness; eventually his involvement with Eula and Linda heightens the intensity and complexity of the fight, but Flem remains the ultimate target. Although in this role Gavin is no longer really analogous to Tristan, he closely resembles another medieval hero. Adams briefly associates Gowan Stevens in Sanctuary with Sir Gawain,[1] but I think that Gavin in The Town bears a far closer resemblance to that knight than does his cousin. Furthermore, whereas Adams makes mention only of the Gawain who goes in search of the Holy Grail, a stronger analogy may be drawn with the hero of the medieval poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, which is only indirectly part of the Grail legend. Here Gawain, a man wholly dedicated to courtly chivalry and Christian ideals must confront a man who is "exasperatingly reasonable."[2] Acting exactly in accordance

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[1]Adams, p. 68.

[2]E. Talbot Donaldson, et. al., eds., "Introduction" to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, trans. T. H. Banks, The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. I (New York: Norton, 1962), p. 184.

with the Arthurian code of honor, Gawain sets out to meet the Green Knight. At the crucial moment of confrontation, his courage, loyalty, and courtesy fail him because he is lacking in practical reason. Whereas even actual decapitation has no effect upon the Green Knight, because he is an embodiment of logic and reason, such a severance would prove fatal to Gawain. The entire experience is a test, and the knight's life is spared in order that he may learn that reason is even more necessary an attribute than loyalty, honor, or courtly courtesy. Gavin Stevens figuratively loses his head over Eula (and later over Linda), thus putting himself in danger of losing even more than that to Flem to the extent that Gavin represents the community. At one point he actually fantasizes that Flem will attempt to bribe him to stop "forming /Linda's/ mind" (T 180), a move which, as it would be an aggressive affront to Gavin's honor, would force the subtle dragon into open battle. Flem, however, is far too logical to allow this to happen. He simply maneuvers Linda so that Gavin's influence becomes an advantage to him.

Aside from Flem and Eula, the characters in The Town defy the sort of categorization which can be applied to the people of The Hamlet. Gavin, in particular, is so complex a character that his nature can be clearly defined only in terms of his movement and growth throughout the last two volumes of the trilogy. Steven Marcus, in his early review of The Town, demonstrates a gross lack of perception when

he suggests that here "Faulkner is still too involved with him personally to admit that Stevens never was and never could be that fountainhead of moral enlightenment and of a gallant, embattled tradition which in the crisis of his culture and therefore of his art Faulkner needs to portray."[1] It is true that Faulkner was deeply interested in Gavin Stevens when he wrote The Town, but he was obviously very much aware of the limitations of his protagonist, a fact which is amply illustrated by his constant juxtaposition of Gavin to Ratliff.

Jefferson was fast becoming a part of the modern world, and Faulkner's need was to create a band of characters who could successfully cope with modernization without destroying Yoknapatawpha's background of Southern tradition, rather than to preserve that tradition in stasis, as Marcus appears to believe. Flem Snopes is--like the industrial giants Carnegie, Ford, Rockefeller, and Vanderbilt--an acquisitive partner in the forging of America into a nation of machines and huge empires. Like his compatriots, he is divorced from tradition and characterized by a cold, merciless drive for power and wealth. Montgomery Ward Snopes and Wallstreet Panic Snopes are certainly children of the Twenties and Thirties; their very appellations are proof of Faulkner's conscious intention in depicting the modernization of Jefferson. The

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[1]"Snopes Revisited," Partisan Review, 24 (Summer 1957), iii, pp. 436-37.

basic conflict in the Snopes novels may be viewed as one between tradition and the modern world. Faulkner knew that it would be fatal for Yoknapatawpha to remain embroiled in its past, but he also understood that a total break with that tradition (as indicated through Flem) would be equally fatal. Thus he has created two major characters to illustrate and explore the precarious situation of man in the modern world: Ratliff, the man who because of the equanimity of his nature transcends the boundaries of past and present; and Gavin Stevens, the traditional man who must enter and learn to live in the modern world, carrying with him the positive accomplishments of the past.

Whereas Ratliff already possesses the ability to understand people and events through modulating his shrewd reason with his intuitions, Gavin struggles throughout The Town toward a true understanding of the occurrences with which he is involved. A large part of Gavin's problem is that his extreme sensitivity interferes with his ability to make objective judgments and decisions. In The Undiscovered Self Jung succinctly states the nature of the predicament which is peculiarly Gavin's. Jung says, first of all, that "modern man can know himself only in so far as he can become conscious of himself." Man's consciousness, he continues,

> orients itself chiefly by observing and investigating the world around him, and it is to its peculiarities that he must adapt his psychic and technical resources. This task is so exacting, and its fulfillment so advantageous, that he forgets himself in the process, losing

> sight of his instinctual nature and putting his own conception of himself in place of his real being. In this way he slips imperceptibly into a purely conceptual world where the products of his conscious activity progressively replaces reality.[1]

It is indeed Gavin's conception of himself, particularly his self-created image as Jefferson's, Eula's, and Linda's white knight, that consistently clouds his perceptions and thus his understanding. He is too sensitive and generous to be termed rational in the sense that Sutpen, Houston, and Flem are; rather, he believes himself to be rational because he has faith in the traditionally acknowledged abilities of higher education and Heidelberg degrees to produce logical, informed, and capable social leaders. Furthermore, he has an implicit faith in the power of words--in his own verbosity--and fails to see that words such as "honor," "virtue," "gratitude," "love," and "revenge" are mere meaningless abstractions when divorced from practical application.

Richardson suggests that "Stevens uses his cushion of words to objectify events and place them into perspective for action."[2] Gavin, however, only thinks he uses words in this way. Watson comes closer to the truth when he says that "Gavin is a romantic theorizer, a speculator on reality who bases his speculations--and his actions--on self-constructed

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[1]Carl Gustav Jung, The Undiscovered Self, trans. R. F. C. Hull (1957; rpt. New York: Mentor, 1958), pp. 92-93.

[2]Richardson, p. 134.

illusions."[1] Through his lengthy explanations and rationalizations, Gavin repeatedly allows himself to be caught in verbal traps. His faith in the power of words is analogous to his faith in the relevance of the Southern and medieval chivalric codes, and as a result of his faulty attribution of value his speculations become, like his words, mere rhetoric. Gavin cannot "objectify events" because he cannot distinguish between his own thoughts and feelings; he regards his fantasies as intellectually-arrived-at judgments.

As a result of this confusion, Gavin becomes lost somewhere between the object or event, which he perceives, and the meaning of that event, which he fails to understand. He is so intent upon constructing theories, which are infused with imagination and fantasy, that he blinds himself to the most obvious conclusions. Gavin's failure to draw accurate conclusions is most evident in regard to Flem's need to achieve a position of respectability within the community. Ratliff's repeated assertion that "he missed it" (T 153, 177) alerts the reader and forces him to focus both on why Gavin "missed it" and on what it is that he "misses." Ratliff, who serves as a friendly foil to Gavin's mental meanderings has a devastatingly accurate understanding of his fellow Snopes-fighter's misapplication of perceptions. He reaches a peak of frustration when Gavin fails to accurately interpret

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[1] The Snopes Dilemma, p. 80.

Flem's actions on the night before Eula's death. Gavin insists that Flem gave Linda's will to Will Varner but Ratliff, who understands Flem far better, knows that in giving it instead to Mrs. Varner he could create exactly the situation which he wanted. In reaction to Gavin's obtuse insights, Ratliff bursts forth with

> No no, no no, no no. He was wrong. He's a lawyer, and to a lawyer, if it aint complicated it dont matter whether it works or not because if it aint complicated up enough it aint right and so even if it works, you dont believe it. (T 296)

Whereas Ratliff, after empirically examining the facts, arrives at the meaning directly, Gavin becomes so fascinated with interpreting the facts that meaning is entirely obscured. Ratliff's understanding certainly is not purely instinctive or intuitive, but whereas Gavin refuses to trust his intuitions, Ratliff does trust his, and tempers that immediate knowledge with a shrewd intelligence, through which process he usually arrives at a correct conclusion. It is the direction of the thought process which most distinguishes Ratliff from Gavin; the former moves in as straight a direction as possible, whereas the latter becomes trapped in a maze. In order to illustrate this contrast, Faulkner has Ratliff use an intriguing metaphor to explain the problems in their battle strategy against Flem. "The trouble is," he says,

> we dont never know beforehand, to anticipate him. It's like a rabbit or maybe a bigger varmint, one with more poison or anyhow more teeth, in a patch or a brake: you can watch the bushes shaking but you cant see what it is or which-a-way it's going until it breaks out. But you can see it then, and usually it's in time. (T 143)

In reference to Ratliff's analogy, Watson says that "Whereas Gavin has an explanation for every movement he perceives in the 'bushes,' Ratliff follows the pattern of movement in order to intercept Flem when he 'breaks out'."[1]

I have not dealt with Charles Mallison because he functions more as an objective observer and reporter than as a character in The Town, at least in regard to the theme under discussion. Chick grows up under the influence of both his Uncle Gavin and Ratliff, and emerges in The Mansion as an intelligent, fairly well-balanced, if somewhat less objective and more obtuse, young man; his development is relevant to this discussion mainly as it reveals the influence of Gavin and Ratliff. As Watson says, he "combines at last the sensitive, verbose idealism of the one with the humanely cryptic realism of the other."[2] Chick sees through his uncle's obtuse speculations, and exhibits his objectivity in correcting Gavin's recapitulations of events by setting them in the right sequence (T 170-71). Because Chick is a relative, a child, and his protegé, Gavin can forgive his exactitude. But Ratliff, his peer in age but inferior (as Gavin sees it) in background, frustrates him almost beyond endurance because he is, "with his damned smooth face and his damned shrewd bland innocent intelligent eyes, too damned innocent, too damned

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[1]Watson, p. 112. [2]Ibid., p. 80.

intelligent" (T 33). Gavin in no way resents Ratliff--he has a sense of humor healthy enough to laugh at his misconceptions--but he is continually frustrated by his friend's ability to see clearly.

Ironically, it is through contrasting him with Eula that Faulkner most clearly points out the nature of Gavin's predicament. Here the dreamer, the idealist, is pitted against the object of his idealizations, who is perhaps the most thoroughly practical character in the novel. Upon receiving Eula's first request to meet him, Gavin muses that "poets are almost always wrong about facts. That's because they are not really interested in facts: only in truth: which is why the truth they speak is so true that even those who hate poets by simple natural instinct are exalted and terrified by it" (T 88). It is Gavin himself, of course, who is ostensibly the poet; he indicates here that he has enough insight into himself to sense that his situation is slightly absurd, although even in this degree of perception there is an element of self-deception. Nevertheless, he retains his "dream," his "truth," and when he hears Eula mounting the stairs to his office he is disturbed by "the sound of trivial human feet: who should have moved like Wagner" (T 89).

Gavin can justify Eula's affair with Manfred de Spain because it fits the tradition of romantic love: but he panics when she offers herself to <u>him</u> because a real affair between them would shatter the illusion which he has created about her.

Perhaps Gavin's most fatal weakness is that he is never able to recognize Eula's true value as a human being. Whereas he lives in a dream world, Eula moves in a world of necessity--she acts only when she has to, and then with definite precision. Faulkner points out the essential difference between them when he has Eula tell Gavin that "Women aren't interested in poet's dreams. They are interested in facts. It doesn't even matter whether the facts are true or not, as long as they match the other facts without leaving a rough seam" (T 226). Because she believes in facts, Eula's perceptions are clear; Gavin's are cloudy because he does not trust facts--because he attempts to arrive at the truth without considering the circumstances which have created whatever situation he happens to be pondering.

The juxtaposition of the male and female principles represented in The Hamlet by Flem and Eula is continued in The Town. Here, however, the conflict is far more subtle than in the earlier novel: Faulkner presents it as a conflict between two fairly distinct types of mental awareness, and de-emphasizes the more symbolic physical distinctions which were so obvious in The Hamlet. Flem still stands as the embodiment of cold logic; but if his rapacity in Jefferson is no less manipulative than it was in Frenchman's Bend, his acquisitiveness is toned down into more subtle movement, as he exists rather in the background of the two last volumes than in the forefront of action. It is, instead, Gavin

Stevens whose far more complex rationality is pitted against Eula's intuition.

In Intruder in the Dust, the old Negro Ephraim tells Chick that "a middle-year man like your paw and your uncle, they cant listen. They aint got time. They're too busy with facks" (I 71). Chick later recalls Ephraim as advising him that

> If you got something outside the common run that's got to be done and cant wait, dont waste your time on the menfolks; they works on what your uncle calls the rules and the cases. Get the womens and children at it; they works on the circumstances. (I 112)

This distinction becomes a major theme in Intruder in the Dust, as it is Chick, Miss Habersham, and Aleck Sander, "with that same sense beyond sight and hearing both" (I 102), who prove Lucas' innocence to Gavin as well as to the community. In The Town, which in Yoknapatawpha chronology takes place before Intruder, Gavin is even more naive in regard to the real implications of events and motivations of people. As Faulkner says, "Probably Stevens learned something from The Town to carry into Intruder in the Dust" (FU 141). He is, as Ephraim indicates, interested in "facks"; but what he fails to understand in his relationships with Eula and Linda, and in his dealings with Flem, is that facts cannot be isolated from the circumstances which surround them and still have true relevance. When rules are applied to facts taken out of context, the facts become abstract ideas and ungrounded theories.

In the Snopes novels the division between the natures of male and female is particularly strong, especially since

there are no such "masculine" or domineering women as Mrs. Compson, Joanna Burden, Drusilla Sartoris, Narcissa Benbow, and Temple Drake. Faulkner, who was intrigued in his earlier novels with the woman who is domineering and morally rigid, places far more emphasis on the complexities of the male mind in his later novels.[1] Leslie Fiedler charges that Faulkner was obsessed by a "fear of the castrating woman and the disease with sexuality."[2] This is, to my mind, an extremely dubious interpretation of the role of these women in the early novels, and is certainly not present in his post-1940 writings. Cleanth Brooks comes far closer to the truth when he suggests that man's idealism and abstractness results to a large degree from his "blindness to the nature of reality" which is, ultimately, "a blindness to the nature of woman."[3] This lack of perception in the male is a major theme in Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, where Dimmesdale and Chillingworth are set against Hester Prynne, who refuses to be defeated by their machinations. The witch mania which terrorized early New England was, in fact, perpetuated by the fierce ideology of the men; women, because of their reliance upon natural instinct,

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[1]The last of these figures who represent, according to Irving Howe, "female malevolence as one of the root terrors of existence," is Charlotte Rittenmeyer of The Wild Palms, published in 1939. See Howe, p. 141.

[2]Love and Death in the American Novel, rev. ed. (New York: Dell, 1960), p. 309.

[3]"Faulkner's Vision of Good and Evil," The Massachusetts Review (Summer 1962), p. 699.

became their victims. For Brooks, "Faulkner's women lack the callow idealism of the men, have fewer illusions about human nature, and are less trammelled by the legalistic distinctions and niceties of any code of conduct."[1]

In the Snopes novels even Maggie Mallison, the embodiment of Jefferson respectability, is like Eula in that she "has access to a wisdom which is veiled from man; and man's codes, good or bad, are always, in their formal abstraction, a little absurd in her eyes."[2] Eula understands Gavin well, but for him the Semiramis-Helen in his mind is always at odds with the real woman. Thus her suicide (which Helen would never contemplate) shocks and mystifies him. Brooks says that "In the Faulknerian notion of things, men have to lose their innocence, confront the hard choice, and through a process of initiation discover reality. The women are already in possession of that knowledge, naturally and instinctively."[3] Gavin poses as a Snopes-fighter, but the basis of those "hard" moral choices which he does make, and through which he matures, is rooted in his discovery of the nature of woman rather than in his battle with Flem. He is far more obsessed with Eula--and through her with her daughter Linda--than he is with Flem's machinations. The first moral choice which Gavin makes--his first truly honorable act, in fact--is in his

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[1]Ibid., p. 697. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid.

refusal to grant Eula's request that he marry Linda to save her from Flem. Gavin's refusal (although he does swear to the marriage as a final protective measure if necessary) is based upon a fairly deep insight into Linda's character, although primarily upon a vision of what he wants her to be. "She is doomed," he later tells Ratliff, "to anguish and bear it, doomed to one passion and one anguish and all the rest of her life to bear it. . ." (T 351). Gavin absolutely declines to deprive Linda of that one passion: "She must have the best" (T 351).

If the denouement of The Town is Eula's suicide, then the thematic center of the novel is her final interview with Gavin. This scene serves two prime functions: it reveals the deepest motivations of all the major characters, and provides at least a skeletal explanation for all the important preceding and succeeding events. Through Eula's clarity of perception, Gavin begins to really understand the true meanings of the events which he has so desperately attempted to unravel. One of the most important things Gavin learns is that he has grossly underestimated Flem's ruthlessness. Eula tells him that Flem is sexually impotent, then follows with a warning that "You've got to be careful or you'll have to pity him" (T 331). One cannot pity Flem because he has, as Brooks says, denied his nature; he "has no natural vices, only the unnatural vice of a pure lust for power and money."[1] Flem's

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[1]Ibid.

motivations in regard to Linda (which Eula explains here) climax in his most monstrous actions in the entire trilogy. Eula explains to Gavin how he has exploited Linda's need to love him as a father in order to get half of Will Varner's money; we later learn that he has just as ruthlessly exploited Eula's natural instinct for love to usurp de Spain's position as president of the Sartoris Bank. As William Barrett states, "The will to power is weakness as well as strength, and the more it is cut off and isolated from the rest of the human personality, the more desperate /and thus the more dangerous/ in its weakness, it can become."[1] And it is, ironically, Flem's drive for power which causes the destruction of Eula--the embodiment of positive natural forces. Through Gavin's monologue on Flem in chapter seventeen, Faulkner cleverly builds toward his denouement: Flem's final act of rapacity. Through tempting the reader to "pity" Flem, Faulkner makes his final act even more ludicrous. By explaining to him how Flem has exploited Linda, Eula prepares Gavin (and the reader) for the monster's final maneuver.

What Eula reveals about Ratliff holds as much import thematically for the reader as it does personally for Gavin. The Ratliff of The Town differs from the Ratliff of The Hamlet only in that he is less idealistic regarding the possibilities of stopping forever the Snopes family's "long

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[1]Barrett, p. 137.

tradition of slow and invincible rapacity" (T 33). His easy movement into Jefferson and his friendship with Gavin concretely demonstrates his social mobility, a consequence of his natural affinity for uncomplicated thought and action. For Gavin, however, Ratliff is something of an enigma; he is a man with little formal education, a peasant background, yet one who possesses a quality of intelligence, perception, and tact which the Heidelberg lawyer lacks. Ratliff, "with his damned smooth face and his damned shrewd bland innocent intelligent eyes, too damned innocent, too damned intelligent" (T 33), is a constant source of admiration and irritation for Gavin. Ratliff's innocence stems not from the sort of blindness that Sutpen and Flem are subject to, but rather from an understanding, a recognition, of the evil within man which he is aware of through his intuitive nature. In contrast to Gavin, Ratliff has no illusions about man. For him, "Man aint really evil, he jest aint got any sense" (M 230).

The two things which Eula tells Gavin which awaken him to and occasion his fuller acceptance of Ratliff as his intellectual and natural superior concern those two social criteria in which Gavin believes so strongly: name and family background. He is stunned first to learn that Ratliff's "V. K." stands for "Vladimir Kyrilytch," and even more so to discover that his grandfather "came to Mississippi with Old Doctor Habersham and Alexander Holston and Louis Grenier and

started Jefferson" (T 323). Gavin is doubly upset by what Eula tells him here: first, because the discovery that Ratliff's family is older and more prestigious than the Stevenses shatters his illusion regarding Ratliff as a sort of ingenius country bumpkin; secondly, because it happened to be Eula Varner Snopes in whom Ratliff confided his secret. The thematic import which this information has is also twofold. First of all, the fact that Ratliff has kept his heritage secret is in violation of the primary code of Jefferson respectability, as family name and tradition hold more sway even than money or property. Ratliff's keeping this to himself serves to reinforce what we already know of his character; he simply does not consider name or tradition important enough to maintain a familial myth, which serves as a further contrast between him and such men as Thomas Sutpen, Jason Compson II, and John Sartoris. This lack of concern with the Southern concept of aristocratic hierarchy is further enforced by the fact that Ratliff's ancestors "forgot how to spell it Ratcliffe and just spelled it like it sounds" (T 323), a consequence of natural change which Faulkner himself allowed to occur with his own name.

Gavin's reaction to the fact that Ratliff chose to confide in Eula takes the form of an impulsive rationalization:

> But he told you: the secret he would have defended like that of insanity in his family or illegitimacy. Why?--No, dont answer that. Why shouldn't I know why he told you; didn't I breathe one blinding whiff of that same liquor too? (T 322)

Gavin is wrong on both points; his explanations reflect his own personal inhibitions rather than any interests of Ratliff. The motives of the latter have nothing to do with defending a family secret; nor is he in love with Eula as Gavin would like to think. Ratliff tells Eula these things because they understand each other. They evidently have an intuitive relationship, close because they are the only people in Jefferson who have a true insight into the nature of the events which occur in the novel. Ratliff is the only man in the trilogy who is never blind to the nature of woman. His affinity with the feminine mind is indicated symbolically by his trade--dealing in sewing machines--and by the fact that he makes his own shirts. Faulkner persists in this particular delineation of Ratliff's character by using identical words, such as "bland," "serene," and "inscrutable" to describe both Ratliff and Eula. This is not to say that he is effeminate; on the contrary, his nature, as it encompasses the extremes of rationality and intuition, necessarily incorporates the analogous attributes of the "masculine" and "feminine" minds. Because he can view events from such a wide perspective, Ratliff is the only character in The Town who clearly understands both Flem and Eula, and what they respectively represent.

As The Town draws to a close, the events surrounding Eula's suicide serve to reveal an even starker delineation of the major characters, in terms of their reactions to these events. The suicide itself indicates that Eula is truly

human; she lives up to her heroic proportions better than Helen or Semiramis ever did. By sacrificing herself for the sake of her daughter, she chooses "death in order to leave her child a mere suicide for a mother instead of a whore" (T 340). This is the immediate reason for Eula's decision to take her life; there are, however, deeper-seated and thematically more far-reaching causes.

As Flem has no moral sense--nothing responsive or humane whatever in his nature--he has no hesitation in exploiting Eula. Once he is sure of eventually inheriting her portion of her father's money he has no further use for her. On the contrary, because of her affair with Manfred de Spain, she is actually a cog in the machinery of his drive toward respectability. Thus, in exposing the affair to Will Varner, Flem plays the next-to-last card in "His game of solitaire . . . against Jefferson" (T 348). He forces Eula to make a decision regarding herself and Manfred, and her unexpected suicide is an act of freedom, liberating her finally from his sphere of manipulation. Flem embodies the totally isolated male principle, a force so potent and dangerous that it destroys Eula, its opposite. Not until the close of The Mansion will he ironically "be forced to the last desperate win-all lose-all by the maturation of a female child" (T 280).

The final action of the novel, however, concerns not Eula's suicide, but the monument which Flem decides to erect. And it is Gavin who finds the "right photograph and had it--

Lawyer still-enlarged, the face part, and sent it to Italy to be carved into a . . . yes, medallion to fasten onto the front of the monument. . ." (T 349). This medallion is a crucial image in the novel, particularly as it serves to further reveal the characters involved with its erection. In the nature of its thematic significance, this medallion is analogous to the medal symbol which, as Heinrich Straumann points out, is so important in A Fable.[1] In that novel it is highly abstract "honor" which originates in the higher echelons of the military hierarchy; it is a sign of the generals' arbitrary domination over and manipulation of the great masses of men who fight their wars. For both Flem and Gavin, Eula's medallion is also an essentially meaningless abstraction. Flem is like the old general in his desire and ability to arrange surface meaning and appearance. His goal is the sham of "respectability"; the general's is the sham of a "glorious" war. In erecting this monument, with its painfully ironic inscription, "A Virtuous Wife Is a Crown to Her Husband," Flem plays the last card in his game of solitaire.

For Gavin, the medallion represents something as senselessly abstract as it does for Flem, although his interest is purely personal. As Ratliff says, "it was that for him Eula Varner hadn't never died and never would" (T 348). The medallion merely serves to perpetuate Gavin's illusion of Eula as an ideal--a Helen or Semiramis: it has nothing

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[1]Straumann, p. 167.

to do with the actual woman. He is like Flem in that each attempted to mold Eula into a representation of his own standards and desires; the medallion is thus, for them, an emblem of an abstract ideal. Again, it is only Ratliff who understands the true significance of the medallion,

> that never looked like Eula a-tall you thought at first, never looked like nobody nowhere you thought at first, until you were wrong because it never looked like all women because what it looked like was one woman that ever man that was lucky enough to have been a man would say, "Yes, that's her. I knowed her five years ago or ten years ago or fifty years ago and you would a thought that by now I would a earned the right not to have to remember her anymore." (T 355)

At this point for Ratliff, Eula achieves the proportions of an archetype, and in this sense an abstraction. He grasps the abstract significance of the carved Eula just as he understood the nature and the power of the actual Eula. He does not, however, make the mistake of confusing the two; for Ratliff the carved medallion is never really Eula. Gavin, on the other hand, is too blind to see beyond his own personal vision, and Flem is interested only in his own end.

The Town is set in the modern world, and a large part of Faulkner's purpose has to do with expressing his definition of modern man. For Jung, "He alone is modern who is fully conscious of the present";[1] man cannot, like Gavin, allow himself to be ruled by his unconscious. Only Ratliff is truly modern in that he alone has become

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[1] Modern Man in Search of a Soul, trans. W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1933), p. 197.

> 'unhistorical' in the deepest sense and has estranged himself from the mass of men who live entirely within the bounds of tradition. Indeed, he is completely modern only when he has come to the very edge of the world, leaving behind him all that has been discarded and outgrown, acknowledging that he stands before a void out of which all things may grow.[1]

Flem Snopes tries by false means to establish, through Eula's tomb and epitaph, a tradition of respectability which Ratliff does not consider important enough to bother acknowledging. No matter how well Flem may appear to fit into the modern world, he is one of "a great horde of worthless people /who/ appear suddenly by the side of the truly modern man as uprooted human beings, blood-sucking ghosts, whose emptiness is taken for the unenviable loneliness of the modern man and casts discredit upon him."[2] Ratliff, on the other hand, is "truly modern" in that he represents that rare breed of men who are capable, through their understanding of the full complexities of human nature, of positive and constructive action.

Gavin, at the conclusion of The Town, stands somewhere between Flem and Ratliff. After all his futile and abstract conjecture upon the reasons behind Eula's suicide, he must turn to Ratliff for the truth--that Eula died because "she was bored" (T 358). Gavin is stunned, but for the first time he actually faces and recognizes the truth:

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., p. 198.

> "Yes," he said. "She was bored. She loved, had a capacity to love, for love, to give and accept love. Only she tried twice to find somebody not just strong enough to deserve it, earn it, match it, but even brave enough to accept it. Yes," he said, sitting there crying, not even trying to hide his face from us, "of course she was bored." (T 359)

In this admission, Gavin demonstrates for the first time a full and true understanding of both circumstance and meaning; it is a milestone in the maturation which he achieves finally in The Mansion. Here he weeps unashamedly because he understands and acknowledges the fact that, because of his blinding illusions, he is one of those who was not brave enough.

CHAPTER IV

"OLD MOSTER JEST PUNISHES; HE DONT PLAY JOKES"[1]

In an interview in 1956 Faulkner stated that "My last book will be the Doomsday Book, the Golden Book, of Yoknapatawpha. Then I shall break the pencil and I'll have to stop."[2] The reader of The Mansion senses that this novel does indeed bring to a close a great and brilliant literary cycle--that after what Cleanth Brooks terms "Faulkner's Revenger's Tragedy,"[3] the Yoknapatawpha saga has come to a close. Although his final work, The Reivers (appropriately subtitled "A Reminiscence"), is an excellent novel in the picaresque tradition of Huckleberry Finn, it is his only work which is "consistently comic in spirit,"[4] devoid of the tragic implications of the rest of his fiction. The Mansion, on the other hand, has the tonal quality of the great early works. It comes even closer than Absalom, Absalom! to the classic Greek tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles. It is pervaded

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[1]M, p. 398.

[2]Jean Stein, "William Faulkner: An Interview," p. 82.

[3]The title of Brooks's essay on The Mansion, The Yoknapatawpha Country.

[4]Brooks, p. 350.

by fierce passions, and peopled with characters controlled by an almost arbitrary divinity.

Whereas in Absalom the plot, pieced together as it is by four separate narrators, is extremely complex, the structure of The Mansion is deceptively simple. Involving the actions of a minimal number of characters, it builds with irrevocable intensity toward a single pre-ordained catharsis--the climax toward which, in fact, the entire trilogy has moved--the destruction of Flem Snopes. For forty-four years[1] Ratliff, later joined by Gavin Stevens, has been trying to rid Yoknapatawpha of Snopeses. Although both have endured in their fight, it is actually Flem himself who has eliminated his kinsmen (with the singular exception of Wallstreet Panic, the "un-Snopes") from Jefferson until at last he has isolated himself as the sole representative and only target of the anti-Snopesists. Gavin and Ratliff both have been proven nearly helpless in the face of Flem's cold rapacity. In The Mansion Faulkner brilliantly demonstrates that a force as sterilly logical and impotent--though evidently invulnerable to outside opposition--as Flem is must ultimately destroy itself. Thus in this novel the two Snopeses remaining aside from Flem move irrevocably toward each other until

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[1] In his chronology Edmond Volpe dates Flem's arrival in Frenchman's Bend in 1902, and his death in 1946. A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner, pp. 402-03.

at last they join forces and eliminate him--and finally themselves--from Faulkner's world. The novel deals primarily with Mink and Linda Snopes: with their relationships with Flem, with their motives for revenge, and finally with their mutual complicity in his death. Gavin and Ratliff remain in the background for the most part, as student and commentator rather than as actors in this "Revenger's Tragedy." They take part in the drama only after the murder of Flem is accomplished.

The Mink whom Faulkner characterizes in The Hamlet is subtly different from the Mink whom we encounter in The Mansion. In the earlier novel his story is strongly linked with those of Ike Snopes and Jack Houston. Here Mink is "cold, indomitable, and intractable" (H 239). His murder of Houston is an act of personal vengeance, prompted by his hatred of the man, so like him, who has so much more than he does. In The Mansion, Faulkner takes the character of the earlier Mink and expands it; in doing so, he creates a sort of mind which is unique in the entire Yoknapatawpha saga.[1] Here Mink shoots Houston because he pushes Mink too far, not because of any personal hatred. He wishes, in fact, that he had had time between shots to tell Houston that

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[1]Characters such as Wash Jones (Absalom, Absalom!), Jewel Bundren (As I Lay Dying), the Goodwins (Sanctuary), and the Gowries (Intruder in the Dust) may be compared to the Mink of The Hamlet; but the Mink of The Mansion is distinctly different from these earlier "poor whites" in complexity of character and in cast of mind.

> I aint shooting you because of them thirty-seven and a half four-bit days. That's all right; I done long ago forgot and forgive that. Likely Will Varner couldn't do nothing else, being a rich man too and all you rich folks has got to stick together or else maybe someday the ones that aint rich might take a notion to raise up and take hit away from you. That aint why I shot you. I killed you because of that-ere extry one-dollar pound fee. (M 39)

As Volpe suggests, "Mink's outrage is not directed against Houston but against the very conditions that fate has imposed upon him."[1]

The only truly "Snopesian" characteristic which Mink has, aside from his background, is his single-mindedness. He is not rapacious, acquisitive, dishonest, or manipulative in the sense that Flem is. Mink possesses both pride and integrity in an extreme sense. He is, above all, as we see him in the opening chapter of The Mansion, a man of passion--a factor which immediately sets him in opposition to Flem. As well as being evidently highly potent sexually, Mink performs every action from a great depth of feeling--he is never, in any way, a man of thought (like Gavin), of cold logic (like Flem), or even of understanding (like Ratliff). He is governed by feeling, not so much in the sense of human sympathy as in the sense of instinctive reactions. Mink's passion, however, is a part of his youth. When he is sent to the State Penitentiary at Parchman for the murder of Jack Houston, he is twenty-five years old. During the thirty-eight years that he waits there for his pardon, his hatred

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[1]Volpe, p. 333.

of the forces which Houston represents changes to an extreme propensity for endurance, and his early passion is subsumed by an indomitable will. Mink becomes, in The Mansion, almost an archetype of Faulkner's concept of the man who endures. It is because of this quality that, as Brooks states, "in this last novel of the trilogy, Mink becomes a hero."[1]

The first two chapters of The Mansion, although narrated by Faulkner, are related distinctly from Mink's peculiar point of view; these passages reveal so much of his character that they might be classified as a sort of indirect interior monologue. His comparison of Hoake McCarron and the other young men chasing Eula to a "gang of rutting dogs" (M 4), and his reference to Linda's birth as Eula's "dropping a bastard" (M 4), set him off immediately as a man not only extremely sensual, but one who is clearly in touch with the most natural and earthy human functions. Furthermore, these passages could be said to reveal a kind of intense familial pride--possibly even jealousy--on Mink's part.

In these opening chapters Faulkner endows Mink with a fierce dignity and an innate, instinctive sort of religion. These attitudes, coupled with his sensual nature, designate Mink as an essentially primitive man, and set him in contrast to the rest of the characters, who move in the twentieth century. If, as Jung asserts, modern man must be primarily

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[1]Brooks, The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 220.

conscious,[1] then Mink is more distinctly un-modern than any other character in the trilogy (with the exception of his cousin Ike, whom he curiously resembles in this respect). Mink lives almost entirely in an unconscious world; he abides by ancient natural laws and moves according to natural rhythms. He is opposed by essentially rational men such as Flem and Houston, though these are conscious only in a very limited sense. Mink has absolutely no interest in the meanings of events; he knows and understands only what happens to him--direct and unconceptualized experience. Jung says that "Primitive man . . . assumes that everything is brought about by invisible, arbitrary powers; in other words, that everything is chance. Only he does not call it chance, but intention."[2] Mink is governed by powers which, while not entirely arbitrary, do control both day-to-day occurrences and his destiny. In taking the chance for criminal indictment which he does in killing Jack Houston,

> He simply had to trust them--the Them of whom it was promised that not even a sparrow should fall unmarked. By them he didn't mean that whatever-it-was that folks referred to as Old Moster. He didn't believe in any Old Moster. He had seen too much in his time that, if any Old Moster existed, with eyes as sharp and powers as strong as was claimed He had, He would have done something about. Besides, he, Mink, wasn't religious. (M 5)

Mink actually is an extremely religious man--but his religion

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[1]Carl Gustav Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, p. 205.

[2]Ibid., p. 132.

is a highly personal one divorced entirely from the organized Protestantism with which he here associates Old Moster. His religion is peculiarly primitive; They are the ancient Fates, the Norns. Or They could represent an even more obscure power which exists not to look over man and punish him for wrongdoing, but to test his quality of endurance. Mink means, in referring to these powers,

> simply that them--they--it, whichever and whatever you wanted to call it, who represented a simple fundamental justice and equity in human affairs, or else a man might just as well quit; the they, them, it, call them what you like, which simply would not, could not harass and harry a man forever without some day, at some moment, letting him get his own just and equal licks back in return. (M 6)

For Mink, this "justice and equity," as it is "fundamental," derives from natural law rather than from a system of jurisprudence.

The two most outstanding events in the "Mink" section of The Mansion are trials--Mink's own, and that of his great-nephew Montgomery Ward Snopes. These trials are firmly linked together through Flem, and the fact that in each he uses the legal system to further his rapacity through firmly establishing and protecting his position in Jefferson. He manipulates Montgomery Ward's indictment in order to reaffirm what Mink's original sentence afforded him--a reprieve. The irony that the law, represented by a man like Gavin Stevens, is actually on Flem's side succinctly points out how meaningless and abstract it really is. Mink's law, on the other hand, is totally

practical. It draws its strength from the earth itself, from man's irrevocable dependence upon natural forces. Men like Thomas Sutpen and Louis Grenier, who--as Faulkner tells us in Requiem for a Nun--actually built the jail and established the legal system in Jefferson, divorced themselves from the earth, violated the land, and set up abstract laws to protect themselves. Mink, as a sharecropper, is at an opposite economic and metaphysical pole from them. He lives from the land, and relies upon the earth and those forces associated with it for spiritual as well as physical sustenance.

Unlike Flem, who has no contact whatever with the land, Mink bases every choice and decision which he makes upon an ancient morality related, through its connection with the earth, to an inviolable concept of brotherhood established through a primitive necessity for survival. After being charged with Houston's murder, Mink patiently waits for nearly a year for Flem to save him. Until the very last moment he has no doubt that his rich and powerful cousin will come to his aid, "would have . . . to save him whether he wanted too or not because of the ancient immutable laws of simple blood kinship. . ." (M 5). However, as Mink discovers, Flem has no reverence whatever for "blood kinship"; he has divorced himself from--betrayed, in fact--his relations, as he has cut himself off from the earth and from all the natural ties which are sacred to Mink. As Brooks says, "he has violated one of the few bonds for which Mink has any respect,

and Mink dedicates the rest of his life to destroying him."[1]

Because of the sort of character, cast of mind, with which Faulkner has endowed Mink, the essential conflict of the trilogy--between the rational mind and the intuitive mind--can be viewed from a slightly divergent angle. Although Brooks is certainly correct in referring to Mink as "in a profound sense a religious man,"[2] he is mistaken in classifying him as "one of Faulkner's many 'Calvinists.'"[3] Mink is not, like Doc Hines and Calvin McEachern of Light in August, rigid and fanatical in his religion; he is intractable only in his will to survive and in seeing what he understands as justice carried out. In contrast to Faulkner's "Calvinists," Mink may be termed "Hebraic" both in his intuitive belief in an unnamable all-powerful divinity, and in his implacable unswerving faith that he will in time "get his own just and equal licks." Barrett says that Protestant man (represented in Faulkner's work by such characters as Hines, McEachern, Goodhue Coldfield, and Rev. Whitfield) is a "creature of spirit and inwardness, but no longer the man of flesh and belly, bones and blood, that we find in the Bible. Protestant man would never have dared confront God and demand an accounting of his ways."[4] Mink is, however, always a man of flesh

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[1]Brooks, The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 223.

[2]Ibid., p. 231. [3]Ibid., p. 232

[4]Irrational Man, pp. 75-76.

and blood--a man conscious only of concrete experience. Like Barrett's concept of Biblical man, he is "very much bound to the earth."[1]

Barrett's discussion of "Hebraism" is so relevant to a delineation of Mink's cast of mind that it is well worth a slight digression in order to draw a firm analogy. Although the Hebrews gave us the Law, according to Barrett "The Law . . . is not really at the center of Hebraism." It is rather faith, "something more primitive and more fundamental," which "lies at the basis of the moral law."[2] Throughout every trial and test Mink, like Job, endures through the faith that They will grant him what he deserves simply through enduring. He has no faith in the legal system; his pardon will come when They feel he deserves it. Thus he thinks, when he is finally released from Parchman after thirty-eight years of waiting, that what he has finally earned is "Not justice; I never asked that; jest fairness, that's all" (M 106). Mink's distinction between "justice" and "fairness" is indicative of his natural understanding of the difference between jurisprudence, in which he has no faith, and natural law, in which he places all his faith--the entire purpose of his existence, in fact.

If, as Barrett states, "The Hebraic emphasis is on commitment, the passionate involvement of man with his own

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[1]Ibid., p. 76.

[2]Ibid., p. 73.

mortal being (at once flesh and spirit), with his offspring, family, tribe,"[1] then Mink is, in the deepest sense, a Hebraic man. If Flem Snopes is characterized by cold logic, Gavin Stevens by theoretical rationalism, and V. K. Ratliff by understanding, Mink Snopes is characterized by faith. By 1946, when his pardon comes, his religion has undergone a change--the divinity in which he places his faith is no longer "they, them, it," who tested him almost to the brink of his endurance, but Old Moster, who "jest punishes; He dont play jokes" (M 398). Mink's faith in Old Moster is even stronger, more trusting and durable, than was his youthful faith in Them, which was based primarily upon their likeness to himself. Old and entirely out of touch with the modern world as he is, Mink calmly and patiently overcomes the obstacles placed before him in his journey from Parchman to Jefferson because he knows, through his faith, that Old Moster will not let him down. Mink's is a sort of knowledge which Barrett attributes only to Hebraic man:

> It is not the kind of knowledge that man can have through reason alone, or perhaps not through reason at all; he has it rather through body and blood, bones and bowels, through trust and anger and confusion and love and fear: through his passionate adhesion in faith to the Being whom he can never intellectually know. This kind of knowledge a man has only through living, not reasoning, and perhaps in the end he cannot even say what it is he knows; but it is knowledge all the same, and Hebraism has its source in this knowledge.[2]

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[1]Ibid., p. 77.

[2]Ibid., p. 79.

In a similar sense, according to Kant,[1] intellect or reason has its source in intuition. In the sense that all his knowledge is based on concrete experience, in the sense that, as Barrett states, "The man of faith is the concrete man in his wholeness,"[2] Mink is intuitive. The source of his faith is an intuitive sympathy with natural occurrences--with the rhythms of the earth. He kills only when those rhythms beat against him--kills only those, like Houston and Flem, who are out of tune with the forces in which he has faith.

The "Linda" section of The Mansion is narrated in its entirety by Chick, Gavin, and Ratliff. This is a departure in point of view from the rest of the novel which, with the exception of two chapters in the "Mink" section, is narrated by Faulkner himself. This technique serves, as it does in The Town, to reveal the characters of the narrators. This function is, however, subsidiary in The Mansion to the revelation of the character of Linda Snopes. We are familiar with Gavin and Ratliff from The Town, but in that novel Faulkner has purposely left Linda's character essentially undelineated. Through the three narrators of her section of The Mansion, however, we are given three separate views of her. Chick Mallison, himself now a young law student, sees her as a beautiful and exotic young woman. Gavin, who had

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[1] See The Critique of Pure Reason, p. 21.

[2] Barrett, p. 77.

attempted to "form her mind" in The Town, is blinded, by what he sees in her of Eula, to the real woman that Linda has become; for him she is the object of his long painful romantic ideal of love which he built around her mother. For Ratliff, always the realist, she is an enigma.

Throughout the last two volumes of the trilogy, however, Linda's relationship with Gavin is complex, and an understanding of its implications is crucial in any interpretation of the Snopes novels. In The Town she learns dependence upon Gavin; she learns to trust him, to believe in his romantic idealism. This trust and dependence carries over into The Mansion, as the older Linda, widowed now and home from the Spanish Civil War, begs him to marry her. Gavin, however, forever honorable, must make true his prophecy that she is "doomed to one passion and one anguish and all the rest of her life to bear it" (T 351). He refuses to marry her for this reason and, to give Gavin due credit, because he knows that it would be an unworthy escape for her. Chick is convinced that they will eventually marry, and is certain that they have some sort of sexual relationship. Ratliff, on the other hand, reassures Chick that Linda will not marry Gavin--"It's going to be worse than that" (M 256). Whether or not Ratliff knows what "worse" is does not really matter; chances are that he does not. The significance of this repeated warning to Chick is that Ratliff senses, through an intuitive

understanding of the mature Linda and the factors involved in the process of her maturity, that she is destined for something far more important than marriage to Gavin Stevens. And Gavin, Linda suggests in turn, is destined for something more fulfilling than marriage with her could be.

At the University of Virginia Faulkner said that Linda was "one of the most interesting people I've written about yet, I think" (FU 195). Although such women as Caddy Compson, Addie Bundren, Rosa Coldfield, Rosa Millard, and Joanna Burden are fascinating characters, Linda Snopes is even more interesting in that she is more complex and far less accessible to the critics, such as Irving Malin and David M. Miller,[1] who plug Faulkner's women into fairly rigid categories. The multi-faceted nature of the mature Linda stems primarily from the variety of influences to which she is subject, particularly during her early years in The Town. In her youth, much confusion results from her exposure to such divergent casts of mind as those represented by Gavin, Eula, and Flem. Gavin brought out in her an innate sensitivity, and tried to instill in her his ideals of romantic love through poetic language. From Eula she inherited both

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[1]See Malin, William Faulkner: An Interpretation (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1957), p. 31, and Miller, "Faulkner's Women," Modern Fiction Studies, 13 (Spring 1967), i, p. 3.

beauty and intuition, although she lacks her mother's Hellenic majesty, and her intuition is somewhat subverted by Gavin's influence. Through her ostensible daughter-father relationship with Flem, she eventually gains an understanding of her purpose in bearing the name Snopes, and attains the strength whereby she can fulfill that purpose. In her affair with and marriage to Barton Kohl, Linda matures. Through Kohl's influence, even after his death and her return to Jefferson, she finally grows out of the confusion engendered by her early influences. Kohl's vocation as an artist, his cosmopolitanism, and his firm though unorthodox belief in communism all aid in fermenting the stronger aspects of Linda's nature, and abate most of her confusion.

Two events occur in The Town, however, which finally mold Linda into the sort of woman who can meet Mink Snopes on his own terms, in mutual purpose, and engineer the destruction of her foster father. The first of these events is Flem's betrayal of Linda's love for him as a father, and his manipulation of that love for profit. When Linda realizes that Flem refuses to allow her to go to college because he is afraid of losing the money that Eula will inherit from Will Varner, she has a will drawn up leaving anything which she might inherit through her mother to Flem. Her action baffles Gavin, but Ratliff perceives her true motive. He explains to Gavin that

> What Linda wanted was not jest to give. It was to be needed: not jest to be loved and wanted, but to be needed too; and maybe this was the first time in her life she never had anything that anybody not jest wanted but needed too. (M 143)

Linda is extremely sensitive: her realization "that the only thing he loved was money" (M 143), coupled with some insight into the extent of Flem's acquisitiveness, plants the seeds of revenge. It is, however, an understanding of the true causes of her mother's suicide which actually plots the course of Linda's life and motivates her return to Jefferson after the Spanish War. The final blow is Flem's monument to Eula, and the fact that he forces her to acknowledge it--to pay tribute to a lie and a farce. It is not knowledge of Eula's eighteen-year-long affair with Manfred de Spain which shocks Linda, but her father's exploitation of that love and the consequent destruction of her mother for his own profit. We last see her in The Town through Ratliff's eyes at the unveiling of Eula's monument,

> setting there by him, tight and still and her back not even touching the back of the seat, . . . her hands in white gloves still and kind of clenched on her knees and not once ever looking at that stone monument with that marble medallion face that Lawyer had picked out and selected . . . and him setting there chewing, faint and steady, and her still and straight as a post by him, not looking at nothing and them two white balls of fists on her lap. (T 354-55)

Although the motives for and the seeds of revenge have been planted in Linda here, it will be ten years before she is mature enough to sense the full implications of her destined

role, and nearly ten more before she will have the strength and the means to carry it out.

When Linda returns to Jefferson in 1937 to live with Flem in de Spain's rennovated mansion, she is a widow, a hero of the Spanish Civil War, an avowed communist, and totally deaf as the result of a war injury. She is at first almost pathetic in her grief, insecurity, and dependence upon Gavin. Brooks calls her "an almost clinically pure example of a woman who is restless, alienated, disturbed."[1] The thing which sustains Linda, however, and which eventually brings her to full maturation, is the memory of her husband. Her love for Barton Kohl fulfills Eula's mythological portent, for Linda possesses the intelligence, courage, and dedication to an ideal (partially instilled by Gavin) to deserve a fully passionate and complete love and to remain faithful to it. Linda's love for her husband is less a sexual love (as with Eula and de Spain) than a love ultimately of soul and spirit. As Volpe notes, "For Gavin, Linda's undying love for her dead husband is the realization of an ideal."[2] Barton Kohl's memory, however, means far more to Linda than it ever could to Gavin, who persists in classifying it in the light of a medieval romance. In her marriage she experienced both a love so full that she sees clearly the extreme contrast

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[1]Brooks, The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 224.

[2]Volpe, p. 337.

between the values held by and the behavior of her mother and her foster father, and an intellectual awakening based upon the contrast between the ideals of communism and capitalism. As Brooks states, she understands that "Flem indeed is the perfect incarnation of all that /she/ has been taught to hate in the system of finance-capitalism."[1] Like Mink, however, she must wait until the time is right.

In the interim Linda dedicates herself to a number of relatively futile causes, from attempting to improve the Negro school in Jefferson to riveting in a shipyard during World War II. With the exception of Gavin and Ratliff, she is alienated from the community, a status which she imposes upon herself not only through her "causes," but by wearing men's clothes and drinking heavily. It is Linda's deafness, however, which actually isolates her from everyone. It shuts her off from ordinary communication, but it also serves a symbolic function in the delineation of her character. After seeing her for the first time as a young man, Chick Mallison describes her as "immured, inviolate in silence, invulnerable, serene" (M 203). His implication that Linda is shut off from the world, walled up by silence, is almost prophetic. The full significance of her silence, however, does not become apparent until the end of the trilogy. Chick later calls her

> the bride of quietude and silence striding inviolate in the isolation of unhearing, immune, walking still

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[1]Brooks, The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 227.

> like she used to walk when she was fourteen and fifteen years old: exactly like a young pointer bitch just about to locate and pin down a covey of birds. (M 230)

Even her voice is a "duck's voice: dry, lifeless, dead. There was no passion, no heat in it; and, what was worse, no hope" (M 217). A warning as to Linda's true nature is here also, although both Chick and Gavin fail to perceive it. She is "inviolate" and inviolable, as she has proven both through thwarting Flem's attempt to make her a victim to his rapacity, and in her devotion to the memory of what her mother and her husband stood for.

The phrase "the bride of quietude striding inviolate" is a direct allusion to the opening lines of Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

> Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
> Thou foster-child of silence and slow time.

This association lends still greater significance to Faulkner's image. If the "bride" is interpreted as both a figure in the freize upon the urn and the urn itself, an analogy may be drawn between the image, and both Linda's function in the external events of the novel and her inner nature. She is at once potential participator in a predestined ritual and an object, an image, through which we may come to understand the significance of that event. Like the urn itself, Linda is an "inviolate bride of silence, inviolable in maidenhead, fixed, forever safe from change and alteration" (M 203).[1] Faulkner makes

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[1]The analogy can be drawn further; as Barton Kohl was an artist, a sculptor in fact, the depth of their relationship

another rather striking allusion to the same poem in Light in August. The art object with which Linda is associated is evocative of essentially the same atmosphere in which Lena Grove moves:

> backrolling now behind her in a long monotonous succession of peaceful and undeviating changes from day to dark and dark to day again, through which she advanced in identical and anonymous and deliberate wagons as though through a succession of creakwheeled and limpeared avatars, like something moving forever and without progress across an urn. (L 5)

Lena Grove (with the exception of the woman in Old Man) is Faulkner's most totally intuitive character and, as indicated by the acknowledged allusions to Keats' poem, her character serves to throw light upon Linda's. Sophisticated as the latter may appear, as she grows she becomes more and more intuitive. Both Eula's early instinctive senses and her mythological portent gradually become her daughter's dominant characteristics. Like Lena and Eula, Linda moves and acts in accordance with necessity rather than design. Her silence supports such an interpretation, as all of Faulkner's primarily intuitive characters are peculiarly silent; they speak only when the need arises, in contrast to the superfluous verbosity of such characters as Gavin Stevens. Shrouded in "quietude," Linda moves irrevocably toward her predestined rendezvous with Mink.

Several times throughout The Mansion Faulkner raises the question of why Linda bothered to return to Jefferson.

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suggests that she also served as a source of inspiration for him, as the urn did for Keats.

Brooks suggests that she "has in fact come back to see justice executed on Flem. In this novel she becomes a sort of Medea, an implacable avenging spirit, biding her own time, giving no hint of what she actually means to do, making use of Gavin Stevens, and, as part of her scheme, willing to live in the same household with the hated Flem Snopes as she cooly plans his execution."[1] I am not convinced that Linda returns to Jefferson with vengeance as a conscious intention. She seems rather to grow into the role which, as Longley points out, Ratliff consistently indicates that she is destined, as Helen's child, to fulfill.[2] Faulkner does not tell us how Linda learns Mink's story; the reader is meant to view the building climax of the trilogy as Gavin, Ratliff, and Mink see it, rather than through Linda's mind. We only know for certain that she is instrumental in securing Mink's pardon and in engineering his escape after the murder. We can, however, delineate her motives and, if perceptive, foresee her actions in view of what we learn about her through the other characters.

Linda and Mink begin at opposite poles; Mink murders Houston in the year of Linda's birth. Thus from divergent moral standpoints--absolute innocence as opposed to fierce violence--their lives gradually converge, move toward a

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[1]Brooks, p. 227.

[2]<u>The Tragic Mask</u>, p. 162.

single moral standpoint. This movement becomes, through Faulkner's genius, thematically logical. The reader senses with ever-increasing intensity that their final mutual act has been predestined; because of Mink's moral development while at Parchman and Linda's maturation in New York, Spain, and Jefferson, when they finally come together at the end of The Mansion they are of a singular mind and purpose. As Watson says, "Based on the larger context of commitment to principled existence, Linda's opposition to inhumanity focuses at last on the injuries attributable directly to Flem Snopes, involving her ideologically in the revenge theme established by Mink's theological belief in universal justice."[1] The conflict between love and acquisitive exploitation of love which permeates the trilogy is resolved through Linda and Mink acting in mutual accord. She has experienced her foster father's rapacity in the deepest human sense: first through his attempted exploitation of her as a young and vulnerable girl; second through his destruction of her mother as both human being and embodiment of love. Mink has been victimized by his cousin's monstrous egocentric coldness in his attempt to destroy the only thing Mink has to hold sacred--his pride in being a man. Watson's interpretation of Mink's justification for avenging his cousin's treatment of him is that "Flem's heedless disregard for his kinsman is illustrative

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[1]The Snopes Dilemma, p. 178.

of an inhumanity that is the more profound for being premeditated. It constitutes a denial and negation, not only of blood ties and human community, but of those individual rights and that dignity which Mink strove to assert and achieve by murdering Houston."[1]

Whereas Brooks likens Linda to Medea, Longley compares the events of The Mansion to the Oresteian pattern of vengeance. He says that "the Venus-Mars-Vulcan myth verges into the Orestes myth when Flem begins to use the patterns of insult and injury to rise in the world."[2] Although the events of the novel do not parallel the events of Aeschylus' trilogy, both motivations and mood are similar. Perhaps the most outstanding feature of comparison is the aura of fate and destiny which hangs over the Snopes books and the Oresteia, and which compels the actors in both works toward the consummation of their respective acts. As Longley views the structural and thematic development of the trilogy, "Linda changes from a beautiful, confused, and insecure teenager into an austere, implacable, almost abstract avenging Fury. Mink is transformed from a vicious little murderer who kills from ambush into a humble and determined instrument of justice."[3] Linda may herself resemble an "avenging Fury," but she and Mink are driven simultaneously by the same Furies which drove Orestes and Electra to avenge the murder of their father. The

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[1]Ibid., p. 58.

[2]Longley, p. 158.

[3]Ibid., p. 46.

members of each pair are fated to join together in mutual acts of revenge. Whereas Linda's destiny is to become mature enough to gain the courage and accept the role of avenger for the wrongs done her mother in the name of Snopesism, Mink's destiny is, as Watson states, "to endure imprisonment in order to earn the right to kill Flem. . . ."[1]

Endurance, however, is not enough. Mink must also come to understand, as well as he is able, the full implications of a triumph of humanity over inhumanity. Faulkner indicates that Mink does attain this understanding, while at Parchman, through his transition from fierce reliance upon the justice of Them to his implicit and total faith in Old Moster. The trials which he undergoes during his journey from Parchman to Jefferson are tests of his ability to act in concrete terms according to that faith in a divinity which "jest punishes." Throughout the entire trilogy, there is a pattern of movement from the abstract to the concrete. Longley makes an extremely perceptive comment when he says that "Much of the brilliance of treatment lies in the simultaneous handling of Flem as both object and abstraction, in the sustained conflict between abstraction and the demands of human life. Essentially, Flem is a creature who consistently injured human beings in the pursuit of an abstraction and who yet must be brought to the bar of judgment as a human being

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[1]Watson, p. 167.

himself."[1] Before he can participate in this final culminating action, Mink Snopes must experience humanity in the most concrete form that he can understand. He must know without reservation that he finally deserves to be the instrument of Flem's destruction. It is no longer enough for Mink to have faith; in order to survive his journey to Jefferson he must believe, consciously, to the depths of his being, that Old Moster does not "play jokes."

As Mink is above all a religious man, the final stage in strengthening his character and his faith evolves through an experience with religion. Twice during his journey from Parchman to Memphis Mink is mistaken for a preacher; the first person to so identify him is the woman who directs him to the Reverend Goodyhay's house for work; the second is Goodyhay himself. It is indirectly through him that Mink's identity is reaffirmed and his mission is sanctioned. Goodyhay, an ex-Marine sergeant, is a self-appointed preacher and the founder of a peculiarly unorthodox Protestant sect. The unusual nature of Goodyhay's church is that it is based not upon abstract doctrine, but upon an entirely realistic and common-sense explanation of man's existence and his means to salvation. In his sermon Goodyhay retells the experience by which he was converted. On a battlefield during World War II Christ, a common soldier, appeared above his foxhole and commanded him to "Fall in" (M 280). Three times he gave the

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[1]Longley, p. 159.

order, and on the third Goodyhay obeyed:

> "'I thought I couldn't,' I says. 'I didn't believe I could.'
> "'Sure,' He said, 'What else do we want with you. We're already full up with folks that know they can but dont, since because they already know they can, they dont have to do it. What we want are folks that believe they cant, and then do it.'" (M 280)

The significance, the power, of Goodyhay's experience lies in the fact that it is entirely concrete--a direct confrontation with a purely practical Christ. This is neither the "pale and desperate Galilean" (M 212) to whom Chick refers nor the "furious and intractable dreamer" mentioned in A Fable, but a blood-and-guts redeemer for whom endurance is the means to salvation. Jung says that "The seat of faith . . . is not consciousness, but religious experience, which brings the individual's faith into immediate relation with God."[1] Mink never joins Goodyhay's congregation because his own religion is so personal that it cannot be communicated or shared. He sits in the little makeshift church "watching them all, himself alien, not only unreconciled but irreconcilable. . ." (M 281). The preacher's story of his conversion has no effect upon Mink because his own experience of God has been even more spontaneous and immediate than Goodyhay's. Instead of experiencing one direct confrontation with Christ, Mink's experience has been an intimate day-to-day living with Them and Old Moster for sixty-three years. Thus Mink intuitively knows what Goodyhay

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[1] The Undiscovered Self, p. 100.

learned in one traumatic gesture--that "A man can get through anything if he can jest keep on walking" (M 289).

What Mink learns through his sojourn with Goodyhay is that he is not really isolated from mankind, but one of a whole race of poor sharecroppers who out of stark necessity have endured. In the little church he experiences his own role as a part of humanity, although this communion is not a conscious realization on his part. Goodyhay's prayer, "Save us, Christ, the poor sons of bitches" (M 282), includes Mink, particularly as it echoes Miss Reba's heartfelt pronouncement upon Mink and, through him, "All of us. Every one of us. The poor son of a bitches" (M 82)--those who are caught as pawns in a gigantic universal chess game played by men like Flem Snopes. Mink, however, through his ability to endure, is like the pawn who successfully crosses to the other side of the board and eventually defeats the opposing king. The donation of ten dollars, replacing the money stolen from Mink, further cements his position as a member of the human race, for with that and a free ride into Memphis he has all he needs to fulfill his role as destroyer of the incarnation of inhumanity. "All he had to do now was to get to Jefferson, and that wasn't but eighty miles" (M 293).

All the action of The Mansion--of the entire trilogy in fact--has built toward Flem's destruction. Both the circumstances and the ironic metaphysical implications which surround the event of his death symbolically resolve the basic conflict

of the trilogy, particularly if one continues to view the rational/intuitive opposition in sexual terms. In The Town Gavin prophesies that eventually Flem "would be forced to the last desperate win-all lose-all by the maturation of a female child" (T 280). Although Linda is far more complex than Eula, she maintains the intense, almost fierce, femininity which she inherited from her mother. It is this quality, an irrefutable and indestructible indication of her humanity, which most forcefully motivates her hatred of Flem. This contrast is exemplified by Gavin's projection that

> apparently all Snopeses are male, as if the mere and simple incident of woman's divinity precluded Snopesishness and made it paradox. No: it was rather as if Snopes were some profound and incontrovertible hermaphroditic principle for the furtherance of a race, a species, the principle vested always physically in the male, any anonymous conceptive or gestative organ drawn into that radius to conceive and spawn, repeating that male principle and then vanishing; the Snopes female incapable of producing a Snopes and hence harmless like the malaria-bearing mosquito of whom only the female is armed and potent, turned upside down and backward. Or even more than a mere natural principle: a divine one: the unsleeping hand of God Himself, unflagging and constant, else before now they would have owned the whole Earth, let alone just Jefferson, Mississippi. (T 136)

Linda, it must be remembered, is not a true Snopes at all: the only Snopesian qualities which she possesses are those she shares with Mink: faith and endurance, commitment and determination. As the embodiment of the male principle in its most extreme form, Flem is tremendously potent as long as he moves in a male world. Sooner or later, however, he must deal with the female world, and his sexual impotence is symbolic

of his ultimate helplessness in the face of the natural earth-bound powers embodied in Linda. Because he has alienated himself from the female world through his exploitation of Eula, he is powerless to cope with Linda's vengeance. "Woman" is Flem's anathema: it is the female principle itself which finally destroys him. Mink, too, is a Snopes, and thus a further extension of the male principle invested in Flem. His deep-seated distrust of Linda stems from the fact that because she is a woman he assumes that her aims are opposite to his. But because he incorporates in his character the humanitarian principle for which Linda stands, he appears unsurprised by her assistance and accepts it without question. Although Mink is primarily masculine, he possesses feminine qualities inversely proportionate to Linda's masculine qualities. Thus the two can meet on equal terms and join in mutual execution of their common purpose. As the Furies of Aeschylus drove Orestes and Electra to destroy Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, so the same Furies drive Mink and Linda to destroy Flem. As Volpe suggests, the events which surround his execution "create a aura of divine retribution about the mission."[1]

Steeped as Gavin Stevens is in classical learning, the true significance of their act is lost on him. Even Flem's own ironically prophetic inscription on Eula's tomb, "Her

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[1]Volpe, p. 336.

Children Will Rise and Call Her Blessed," completely escapes Gavin's understanding. He is, in fact, more shocked by Flem's murder than he had been by Flem's most rapacious exploitations. Furthermore, as Brooks observes, "He completely underestimates Linda as a woman or as a committed human being."[1] In The Town both Gavin and Linda are in what might be termed the adolescent stage of maturity. They are both young, naive, and over-sensitive--Linda primarily because of Gavin's influence. In the process of maturation, however, Linda overtakes Gavin and surges ahead of him. Her realization of what Flem really is undermines even Gavin's influence: she knows that she cannot tell Gavin of her growing hatred for her foster father because he is, at the end of The Town, incapable of understanding or accepting it. In The Mansion, Gavin is left out of Linda's real world because he still is not mature enough to contain the knowledge of what she intends to do. He only accepts it (and even then is shaken to the very foundation of his being) after Flem is dead and he is forced to recognize the fact that his murder had been coldly premeditated by Linda--that this was her prime reason for remaining in Jefferson, living in the same house with him.

As in The Town, in this final volume Gavin's mental awareness and awakening is constantly juxtaposed to Ratliff's

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[1]Brooks, p. 228.

intelligent perception and understanding. Before showing the reader how Gavin misjudges Linda and Mink, Faulkner uses an intriguing illustration to show us why Ratliff does not misjudge them. The two incidents which best accomplish this occur while Gavin and Ratliff are in New York City for Linda's wedding. The Allanovna tie episode accomplishes two things. First, it evidences Ratliff's reverence for true artistry: second, it serves to establish a prelude to his later reaction to Barton Kohl's sculpture. Whereas for Gavin an Allanovna tie is a status symbol, for Ratliff it is an art object which he eventually keeps "on a rack under a glass bell" (M 231) in the center of his parlor.

When Kohl shows his sculptures to Ratliff he expects the Mississippi sewing-machine salesman to be shocked, as Gavin was. Ratliff, however, becomes fascinated by the pieces and spends a good amount of time looking,

> at some I did recognise and some I almost could recognise and maybe if I had time enough I would, and some I knowed I wouldn't never quite recognise, until all of a sudden I knowed that wouldn't matter neither, not jest to him but to me too. Because anybody can see and hear and smell and feel and taste what he expected to hear and see and feel and smell and taste, and wont nothing much notice your presence nor miss your lack. So maybe when you can see and feel and smell and hear and taste what you never expected to and hadn't never even imagined until that moment, maybe that's why Old Moster picked you out to be one of the ones to be alive. (M 173)

Ratliff's ability to cope with the unexpected is a large part of his propensity for the shrewd insight which leads to understanding. In him Barton Kohl recognizes a creative mind: he responds almost immediately to the man who alone understands

the significance of the medallion on Eula's tombstone, and who, through a natural verbal artistry employs succinct metaphors to describe the movements and motivations of those characters with whom he is involved. As soon as Linda returns to Jefferson she asks about Ratliff--the one Mississippian whom her husband really liked (which, of course, is rather a blow to Gavin). Kohl thought so much of Ratliff, in fact, that he bequeathed him one of his finest sculptures, as Linda tells Gavin:

> "You remember it--the Italian boy that you didn't know what it was even though you had seen sculpture before, but Ratliff that had never even seen an Italian boy, nor anything else beyond the Confederate monument in front of the courthouse, knew at once what it was, and even what he was doing?" (M 200)

The distinction which Faulkner emphasizes here between Ratliff and Gavin through the agency of Kohl's sculpture may also be seen in terms of Coleridge's distinction between imagination and fancy. He asserts that the imagination "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate," and "is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead. . . ."[1] Throughout the trilogy Ratliff exhibits possession of a truly creative imagination: it is this quality which enables him to consistently arrive at the truth about people, motivations, and situations. Gavin, on the other hand, is a man obsessed with fancy, which Coleridge describes

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[1] Biographia Literaria, ed. George Watson (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1965), p. 167.

as having "no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space. . . ."[1] Gavin mistakes this faculty--if it may be so termed--of fancy for poetic imagination, and thus considers himself a kind of poet. Contrary to his belief, however, a true poet is interested in facts and circumstances; he must be in order to arrive at truth and communicate it, which Ratliff does.

The purpose of those chapters in The Mansion which deal with Clarence and Orestes Snopes is to further objectify this essential difference between Ratliff and Gavin in the context of Snopes-fighting. Both episodes establish their respective abilities in fighting Snopeses. However, whereas Gavin merely takes advantage of a situation to defeat Orestes Snopes, Ratliff creates a situation which ultimately destroys Clarence Snopes's political career. These chapters also serve as a prelude to Gavin's frantic actions and Ratliff's calm premonitions as the final events of the novel move into their sphere of action.

Throughout the events which follow Flem's murder, Ratliff remains "serene," "bland," and calm. For Gavin, however, these events constitute a denouement in the development of his character toward which he has been moving, under the influence of Ratliff, for forty years. His first reaction to the suggestion of Linda's complicity in the murder is one of negation, though he says "'Certainly not' . . . quickly, too

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[1]Ibid.

quickly, too late" (M 419). He is eventually forced to recognize the truth when he realizes that Linda had ordered the car in which she leaves Jefferson "the moment she knew for sure he could get Mink the pardon" (M 425). According to Jung, "We can recognize our prejudices and illusions only when, from a broader psychological knowledge of ourselves and others, we are prepared to doubt the absolute rightness of our assumptions and compare them carefully and conscientiously with the objective facts."[1] It is the fact of Linda's premeditation of Flem's murder, shattering as it does the illusion of her which he has created and tried to sustain, which shocks Gavin into his final realization about human nature. He also accepts his own complicity, unconscious as it might have been, in plotting Flem's murder: it was Gavin who actually arranged for Mink's pardon. It is this which forces him into conscious understanding of his own--and consequently man's-predicament, through acceptance of moral responsibility. He says, with grim humor, to Ratliff that "'you're not safe. Nobody is, around me. I'm dangerous. Cant you understand I've just committed murder?' 'Oh, that,' Ratliff said" (M 427).

As Brooks says, however, "in the end he does become an accessory after the fact, and quite deliberately."[2] As he and Ratliff drive out to Frenchman's Bend the night of the funeral

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[1]The Undiscovered Self, p. 115.

[2]Brooks, p. 239.

to find Mink and give him the money which Linda has left for him, Gavin indicates that he has finally achieved a measure of understanding comparable to Ratliff's:

> "There aren't any morals," Stevens said. "People just do the best they can."
> "The pore sons of bitches," Ratliff said.
> "The poor sons of bitches," Stevens said. (M 429)

In The Sound and the Fury, Dilsey, one of the very few Faulkner characters who is consistently commensurate with Ratliff in capacity for understanding, says that "I does de bes I kin" (SF 396). In echoing Dilsey's affirmation of the human ability to endure, Gavin lifts himself out of the realm of illusion. As Watson says, "His maturation is characterized finally by his movement from the excesses of idealism toward the succinctness of perceptive realism."[1] His echo of Miss Reba's, Montgomery Ward's, Goodyhay's, and finally Ratliff's concensus that men are "pore sons of bitches" is a further affirmation for Gavin, especially in that he includes himself for the first time as a member of the actual ranks of humanity. Through aiding Linda and Mink in the murder of Flem and, even more, in helping Mink to escape, Gavin has finally consciously participated in a constructive, human, concrete action. In this concluding episode he is not lost between the actual events and the meanings of those events. For the first time his perceptions are stripped of illusion,

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[1]Watson, p. 81.

and he thus achieves a measure of understanding which, Faulkner suggests, will be given room to grow now that Gavin has accepted and acknowledged his existence in the real world.

CHAPTER V

"HELEN AND THE BISHOPS, THE KINGS AND THE UNHOMED ANGELS, THE SCORNFUL AND GRACELESS SERAPHIM"[1]

The final passage of The Mansion brings the Snopes trilogy, and thus the entire Yoknapatawpha saga, to a powerful and profound conclusion. The rational/intuitive theme which is the subject of this discussion is implicit in the immensely complex image with which Faulkner closes The Mansion. Its implications include both the "wilderness theme" which has been established as a major concern throughout his fiction, and his concept of the predicament and role of man in the modern world. Through the thoughts and actions of Ratliff, Gavin, and Mink, we view the direction, the purpose, and the destiny of the entire Yoknapatawpha retinue of characters.

The most threatening aspect of modern man's dilemma is the danger of total self-annihilation, a possibility of which Faulkner became increasingly aware. He made the statement at the University of Virginia that "There's a--what quality in man that prevails, it's difficult to be specific about, but somehow man does prevail, there's always someone that will never stop trying to get rid of Snopeses" (FU 34).

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[1]M, p. 436.

Snopesism represents all in man which is evil and destructive --rapacity, greed, lust for power, drive to manipulate, logic divorced from intuition, total rejection of the concept of brotherhood. In his trilogy Faulkner attempts to define the sort of man, who through fighting Snopesism, will prevail.

Those characters who are able to withstand--or to defeat--Flem Snopes must possess at least the quality of endurance. Those who survive him are those who can do more than endure--they prevail. In his Nobel Prize Address delivered at Stockholm in 1950 Faulkner explicitly states the dilemma of modern man, and the role of the artist in solving his predicament. Modern man's dilemma is that "There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question: When will I be blown up?" (FW 131). How to keep himself from destroying himself is the problem that man must solve if he is to survive. Even the threat which World War II posed did not shake Faulkner's faith in the human capacity for creative action. He asserted this faith in his Stockholm Address when he said:

> I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure: that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking. I refuse to accept this. I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. (FW 131-32)

The distinction which Faulkner draws here between man's ability to endure and the promise that he will prevail is

crucial to an interpretation of the Snopes trilogy. Endurance may be defined as the ability to sustain oneself throughout any trial or hardship. The man who prevails must also endure, but he must do more than endure: he must persevere. Rather than merely sustaining himself, he must be capable of taking action that will help sustain other men. Those characters such as Ike Snopes, who endure, are primarily intuitive characters. Extremely rational men like Thomas Sutpen and Flem Snopes attempt to prevail and, because they lack human understanding, they destroy themselves. It is only the man like V. K. Ratliff--and, finally, Gavin Stevens--who ultimately does prevail, because he incorporates both extremes; through his ability to reinforce reason with intuition he is creative in the most positive sense.

What Faulkner suggests in his Stockholm Address that man must do, and what he himself attempts to do in his post-1950 novels, is to redefine man's spiritual nature. Old institutions, old religions, and old values which can no longer buoy and support man must be discarded for new ones. In order for man to prevail, he must discover a firmer basis for his values and thus redefine both his concept of himself and his role in the modern world. If modern man is alienated, as Jung asserts, then he is so because he must fight to maintain his individuality within a highly mechanized and group-oriented society. The greatest danger to which individual man is subject is, according to Faulkner, "almost a universal

will to regimentation, a universal will to obliterate the humanity from man even to the extent of relieving him not only of moral responsibility but even of physical pain and mortality by effacing him individually. . ." (FU 242).

Because the basis for both Western man's right to individuality and his concept of moral responsibility has been Christianity, it is with this tradition that man's re-evaluation must begin. A Fable is Faulkner's most explicit and most ambitious attempt to direct man toward a concept of Christianity through which he can survive in the modern world. In that novel, at the conclusion of the scene in which the old general tempts the corporal by offering him dominion over the earth, he repeats, almost verbatim, the words which Faulkner used in his Stockholm Address. The old general asserts that

> "after the last ding of doom has rung and died there will still be one sound more: his voice, planning still to build something higher and faster and louder; more efficient and louder and faster than ever before, yet it too inherent with the same old primordial fault since it too in the end will fail to eradicate him from the earth. I dont fear man. I do better: I respect and admire him. And pride: I am ten times prouder of that immortality which he does possess than ever he of that heavenly one of his delusion. Because man and his folly--"
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> "Will endure," the corporal said.
>
> "They will do more," the old general said proudly. "They will prevail." (F 313)

The old general's position, however, is not identical with Faulkner's. For him, man's ability to prevail is rooted in the ability of certain men to prevail over other men. The old general is a manipulator of men, a planner, a designer in the

sense that Thomas Sutpen is, the essential difference between the two men being that Sutpen's ground is a social battle field, whereas the general's is political. Furthermore, it is not man's capacity for building machines--of which the old general is proud--through which he will prevail, but rather his ability to maintain his individuality through gaining understanding. In A Fable, it is only the British runner who is able to do this, and through him the corporal himself prevails.

As Faulkner has shown through his "Calvinists," the old Protestant ideals upon which our very nation was founded have become rigid and dead. The Christ who stands at the foundation of modern organized Christianity is not only a "pale and desperate Galilean" (M 212), but a "furious and intractable dreamer" (F 321). Goodyhay's Christ and the corporal do not represent a new concept of the role of the Son of God; rather, they are the results of a re-evaluation, a new understanding of what Christ actually was--a man whose ideals demanded practical interpretation. As the priest tells the corporal before his execution, it was Paul,

> who was a Roman first and then a man and only then a dreamer and so of all of them was able to read the dream correctly and to realise that, to endure, it could not be a nebulous and airy faith, but instead it must be a church, an establishment, a morality of behavior inside which man could exercise his right and duty for free will and decision, not for a reward resembling the bedtime tale which soothes the child into darkness, but the reward of being able to cope peacefully, hold his own, with the hard durable world. . . . (F 321)

This is essentially, however, a doctrine of endurance. In order to perform its true function the Church must be allowed freedom within the bounds of Christian concept; man cannot prevail through the Church if it remains static and its doctrines unyielding, as is true in much of modern Protestantism. Ironically, it is the very ideal of individuality, asserted by Christ, which His Church has come to deny to man. Thus the man who prevails must stand outside the Church.

V. K. Ratliff is a deeply Christian man in that he holds sacred the values of compassion and understanding which Christ taught. But he is not a conventional Christian; he belongs to no church, and places his faith in the same Old Moster whom Mink comes to trust. It is through Ratliff that Faulkner best points out this aspect of modern man's dilemma; because of the decline of organized religion as a vital force modern man must place new emphasis upon the activities of the psyche, the spirit--that which Jung refers to in the title of his book as the "Undiscovered Self." One symptom of the realization which Gavin Stevens comes to at the end of The Mansion is the fact that he at last relinquishes his "youthful dream of restoring the Old Testament to its virgin pristinity" (M 427). He finally realizes the futility of such an endeavor. What Gavin actually gives up is a life-long attempt to mold the Old Testament into Greek, the New Testament language. Finally, he realizes that the Old Testament

values are "pristine" as they are: and, with his newly awakened capacity for understanding, he knows that he is "too old now . . . to be all that anguishing" (M 427) over a totally unnecessary, even a sullying, effort. It is through direct experience that he must learn, not through re-translating the Law. In this sense, Gavin is analogous to the British runner as he finally learns to understand the true implications which religion has for him.

The significance which the earth holds for mankind is, however, even more basic than Christianity to an understanding of Faulkner's concept of man's ability to endure and to prevail. Because it is from man's relationship to the earth that all of his ideas, concepts, and values arise, and around which all of his actions revolve, the very roots of religion are found in the land. The earth is a paradox: it is both deadly and life-supporting: it is the center of man's experience, and the source of his illusions. For Faulkner, the earth is more than a symbol; it is the essence of life itself--the primordial cause, by virtue of its paradoxical nature, of both man's suffering and his salvation. The manner in which the land has been used throughout history is a diagram upon which the workings of man's mind are written, and it is primarily through this diagram that Faulkner delineates the morality of his characters.

Man must recognize and acknowledge the importance of the land as the source of his existence before birth, during

life, and after death. Flem Snopes is doomed because he refuses to acknowledge that he has any tie with the earth; the land is the basis upon which man establishes his system of values, but Flem has no values, no moral sense whatever. As the source of man's physical and spiritual existence, the earth is both concrete and abstract. The manner in which man regards it has more influence than any other factor in determining his character. For Thomas Sutpen, for instance, the earth is a means to attaining his design. For him the land is an abstraction--little more than a necessary commodity. Thus the earth itself is the source of man's rapacity: money, and thus power, is an abstraction from the land, and is so doubly removed from the concrete aspect of the earth. Even Christianity, during the Middle Ages, became a justification for feudal dominion of one man over another through its ownership of vast areas of Europe. War, as Faulkner persistently asserts in A Fable, has its source in disputes over land and, as man is part of the land, in domination over other men. This is, in fact, the old general's object in promoting and sustaining wars.

The earth, however, is unconscious, inanimate--although an agency which produces, sustains, and destroys life. As man is a conscious animal, he must maintain a certain distance from the earth, in a metaphysical sense. He cannot own or exploit the land, but neither can he give himself over to

it wholly if he is to survive. He must understand the earth's power, but must employ his consciousness in drawing his sustenance from it. Thus the sharecropper--who is closer to the land than even the farmer who owns his property--must employ the potential of the earth through exerting physical control over it, and taking from it only what he needs in order to live.

Mink Snopes has a relationship with the earth which might be called peculiar unless viewed in the context of his vocation as a tenant farmer and his particular cast of mind. His whole life has been built upon the land, and hence all of his ideas have arisen from an inherent knowledge of the paradox which is implicit in the earth. His concept of blood kinship, like that of Abel, Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph, is derived from man's mutual origin in the earth. It is because Flem, like Cain, violated this bond of brotherhood that Mink kills him. Thus even his faith in Old Moster, who "punishes" (but "dont play jokes" like the abstract They, them, it in whom he believed in his youth) is an arbiter of justice formulated through an intuitive respect for the earth.

Just as Mink knows that the earth has given him life, he knows that the same force is powerful enough to reclaim that life. On his last journey from Memphis to Jefferson, this knowledge becomes a fear that, close as he is to his goal, the earth will take him before he has the opportunity

to kill Flem. It is not, as Brooks suggests, "the countryman's fear of catching cold by sleeping on the ground,"[1] but a fear of premature death. The danger of such a sleeping place is that

> once you laid flat on the ground, right away the earth started in to draw you back down into it. The very moment you were born out of your mother's body, the power and drag of the earth was already at work on you. . . . As soon as you could move you would raise your head even though that was all, trying to break that pull, trying to pull erect on chairs and things even when you still couldn't stand, to get away from the earth, save yourself. (M 402)

So Mink sleeps that last night in a truck, because even a grown man must find "something, anything to intervene between /his/ unconsciousness, helplessness, and the old patient ground that can afford to wait because it's going to get /him/ someday" (M 402).

Once Mink has accomplished his mission in destroying Flem, however, his fear dissipates. His purpose fulfilled, and escape ensured by Linda's money, he can say, "I'm free now. I can walk any way I want to" (M 434). Moreover, he can take the chance of lying down on the earth. The final passage of The Mansion, in which Faulkner records Mink's death, is so crucial to an understanding of the theme in terms of which the trilogy has been discussed that it is worth quoting in full:

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[1]The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 242.

> But he could risk it, he even felt like giving it a fair active chance just to show him, prove what it could do if it wanted to try. And in fact, as soon as he thought that, it seemed to him he could feel the Mink Snopes that had had to spend so much of his life just having unnecessary bother and trouble, beginning to creep, seep, flow easy as sleeping; he could almost watch it, following all the little grass blades and tiny roots, the little holes the worms made, down and down into the ground already full of the folks that had the trouble but were free now, so that it was just the ground and the dirt that had to bother and worry and anguish with the passions and hopes and skeers, the justice and the injustice and the griefs, leaving the folks themselves easy now, all mixed and jumbled up comfortable and easy so wouldn't nobody even know or even care who was which any more, himself among them, equal to any, good as any, brave as any, being inextricable from anonymous with all of them: the beautiful, the splendid, the proud and the brave, right on up to the very top itself among the shining phantoms and dreams which are the milestones of the long human recording--Helen and the bishops, the kings and the unhomed angels, the scornful and graceless seraphim. (M 435-36)

Mink loses his fear of the earth because in killing Flem, he has affirmed man's most ancient responsibility in protecting the land--and through it mankind--from one who represented the total negation of that responsibility through his violation of the principle of universal brotherhood. Through his endurance and perseverence, Mink has at last proven himself worthy of becoming once again one with the earth, and thus with all of humanity. As for Orestes in the concluding play of Aeschylus' trilogy, the Furies have become the Eumenides--the Benevolent Sisters.

The concluding image, one which Faulkner uses with variations throughout the Snopes books, is vital in establishing the significance of the rational/intuitive theme in

in the trilogy. In The Hamlet it is associated with Ike Snopes, who is even closer to the earth than Mink is. He is intuitively aware of the soil which contains "Troy's Helen and the nymphs and the snoring mitred bishops, the saviors and the victims and the kings. . ." (H 184). He watches his cow, who "is there, solid amid the abstract earth. He walks lightly upon it, returning, treading lightly that frail inextricable canopy of the subterrene slumber--Helen and the bishops, the kings and the graceless seraphim" (H 189). Faulkner has gone back to the earliest volume of his trilogy, taken this image, and expanded it to incorporate the essence of those themes with which he is primarily concerned in his later fiction. Although Manfred de Spain is referred to as "supremely damned among the lost infernal seraphim" (T 270), and Eula is "that fallen seraphim" (M 135), as it appears at the conclusion of The Mansion, this image encompasses and includes all of humanity.

Mink does not, as Watson asserts, ascend into Heaven;[1] that mythological region is an abstraction which Faulkner denies. "Helen and the bishops, the kings and the unhomed angels, the scornful and graceless seraphim" reside within the earth. In A Fable the old general has a sort of vision which incorporates elements of the same image. While thinking about man's immortality, he envisions it arising

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[1]The Snopes Dilemma, p. 229.

> out of that enduring and anguished dust, . . . out of the dark Gothic dream, carrying the Gothic dream, arch- and buttress-winged: by knight and bishop, angels and saints and cherubim groined and pilastered upward into soaring spire and pinnacle where goblin and demon gryphon and gargoyle and hermaphrodite yelped in icy soundless stone against the fading zenith. (F 221)

The image here of a French Gothic cathedral is more visually concrete than that quoted above. But for the old general, there are two classes of beings: he belongs to the first, the dispossessors, the wielders of power, not to the latter group, the dispossessed, the suffering ranks of men who fall victim to the members of the first group. The old general, in making this distinction, attempts to place himself above the masses whom he manipulates. But, as Faulkner himself calls him "the dark, splendid, fallen angel" (FU 62), he must ultimately become a member of the company listed at the conclusion of The Mansion, who are finally "inextricable" from the earth and from each other, and "anonymous."

It is within the paradoxical earth itself that the paradox within man is finally resolved. The rational men and the intuitive men, distinctly separate in life, become anonymous with one another in death. The entire Yoknapatawpha retinue: Sutpen, Christmas, the Frenchman, Eula, Ike, Mink, etc., become one with the "old patient earth," because each in some sense possessed in life the quality of enduring suffering; only Flem Snopes cannot be included. Man's salvation lies within the earth, in his capacity for learning

through the land, which endures forever, to endure--to contain within himself at last that paradox which the earth contains. Although each endured in his own way, each one was also destroyed, either through being too rational (like Sutpen), too intuitive (like Ike and Eula), or simply by being unable to resolve the paradox of necessarily containing both faculties because he is a man, he destroys himself by understanding the paradox too late (like Joe Christmas).

The only characters who remain standing upright on the earth are Gavin Stevens and Ratliff, two old men who have not only endured the fight against Snopesism, but, through persevering in that struggle, have finally prevailed. Ratliff has taught Gavin that it is only through concrete experience that man's intuitions can, coupled with the reason which he innately possesses, lead him to a conscious understanding of his predicament in the modern world. It is not only the juxtaposition of reason and intuition, but the reinforcement of one with the other in the development of individual man, which will save the human race.

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